

THE MASCULINIZATION OF EVERYONE? : A STUDY  
OF A PROFESSION IN GENDER TRANSITION

Stella Perrott

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
University of St Andrews



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TRANSITION**

**STELLA PERROTT**

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy at**

**UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS**

**Department of Management**

**July 2003**





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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an exploration of how professional status is gained and sustained. Sociologists, in taking for granted which occupations are universally identified as professions have concentrated their studies on elite occupations, primarily law and medicine. Their attention has been focussed on the occupational, organizational and behavioural characteristics of these professions, rather than the personal or social characteristics of the incumbents. Consequently, although acknowledging that class, gender and race can provide or limit the resources for professionalizing, these personal attributes have not been considered central to the understanding of the term profession.

The research is concerned with the relationship between professional status and gender in probation during a period in its history when it faced considerable threats. It traces the profession's history and maps its rise and fall in relation to its changing gendered composition, culminating in the government's decision to remove the prior qualification for practice in 1995 in order to attract ex-servicemen into probation.

The reconstruction of probation into a credible profession is the substantive focus of this study. The analysis of the reconstruction is through a gendered lens and a discourse analytical approach is used to examine texts prepared by probation to promote its cause. This thesis concludes that the status of an occupation is directly related to its gendered construction and to be considered a 'full' profession requires middle class masculinity.

Whilst masculine characteristics continue to be necessary for influence and success, the constant drift towards the masculinization of everyone undermines the contribution women can make to organizations and services. In retrospectively revealing the processes through which masculinization and professionalization are discursively achieved, the study opens up the possibility for future challenges to the devaluation of occupations dominated by women.

## DECLARATION

I, Stella Perrott, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 77,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is a record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date

Signature of candidate

I was admitted as a final year research student and candidate for the degree of doctor of Philosophy in September 2002; the higher study for which this is a record was completed in the University of St Andrews 2002 and 2003.

Date

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

In 1907 two former Coldstream Guards officers, Nelson and Batchelor, were the first probation officers to be appointed. They were

'tall and slim, with military - style moustaches characteristic of that period: indeed, their appearance seemed quite impressive - a quality that no doubt helped them in their relationship with the courts' (Page 1992: 3-4).

As Guards officers Nelson and Batchelor began a long historical trend of probation as a suitable career for men leaving military occupations, a trend that was to continue right up to the start of the 1970s. Nearly sixty years and several thousand recruits later, the demographic composition of the workforce had changed radically and new probation recruits were, primarily, young female graduates in their first career. These young women had benefited from the opening up of the professions to women and the massive expansion of higher education from the 1960s onwards. The rise in the number of women was not hailed by the government as a triumph for equal opportunities or viewed as a sign of progression. It was a pattern they hoped to reverse. This thesis is about the government's attempts, between 1994 and 1997, to remilitarize and remasculinize probation and probation's attempts to resist the government's agenda whilst also securing its professional status.

In determining to introduce more ex-military personnel into the probation service, the Conservative government was not seeking to return to a tradition. It wanted to find work for soon-to-be ex-servicemen due to be discharged from the army after the end the cold war. It was also concerned that offender supervision by female

probation officers was a 'soft' sentencing option which could be toughened up if provided by military men. The government therefore set about strengthening the punishment elements of the probation task and remasculinizing the workforce. In doing so, it determined to remove the social work qualification as a pre-requisite for practice and to remove probation training from higher education. In 1995 the government formally announced its intention to replace university based social work training with shorter 'on the job' training and, when making the announcement, was explicit in its desire to see more ex-service men appointed as probation officers. It considered the two-year Diploma in Social Work (DipSW) course as unattractive for men entering their second careers and also unnecessary in the light of their experience in the uniformed services.

The *removal* of a prior qualification for practice is unprecedented in the history of the professions in the UK. Although the decision to do so was finally reversed by the incoming Labour government in 1997, from 1995-1997 it appeared that the government's attempts at state sponsored deprofessionalization would be successful. Understandably, those working in probation were dismayed at the decision as were those responsible for probation training in the universities. Not only were probation officers concerned about the loss of the qualification for their profession but also many were not attracted to the idea of a probation service made up of predominantly ex-service personnel. Cultural as well as gender differences were very evident and there were concerns that ex-servicemen would, without the period of acculturation that prior training provides, bring a value system that was antithetical to the social work values held by the current workforce. The profession, therefore, did all that it could to persuade, initially the

Conservative and, later, the Labour government of the need for a prior qualification for practice.

Probation faced a number of other problems in the early 1990s. The government repealed the more liberal aspects of The Criminal Justice Act 1991; threatened privatization or 'independentization' of some probation services through the transfer of responsibilities to the voluntary sector (Home Office 1990a); threatened amalgamation with the prison service (Home Office 1991); and expected probation to deliver tougher community sentences within a 'prison works' philosophy. In setting out to re-shape the probation workforce to make it more closely resemble those occupations that might be assumed to be more willing to implement the tough punishment and control agenda, the government wanted recruits from occupations that already had a strong tradition of control and firm discipline.

Probation found that it was defending, not only training, but also, its very existence and success appeared uncertain. In order to succeed and again occupy a more central role in criminal justice policies, probation had to change radically and reconstruct itself and its task differently. It is this reconstruction that is the focus for this study. This thesis is the story of probation's defence of training and its response to the government's plans. The underpinning narrative details how the profession went about securing the status and credibility it had previously enjoyed through discursive means. The analysis centres on the nature of profession, its past and current meaning and how it is constructed and maintained and its relationship with other social systems.

This thesis is also about gender, occupational masculinity and femininity. Gendered occupational attributes are dynamic and operate across a number of dimensions such as class, sexuality and race (Davis 1981; Frankenberg 1993; Skeggs 1997) and will manifest themselves differently in different contexts and at different times (Connell 1987, 1995). Attributes of masculinity and femininity have been explored between nations (Hofstede 1998); as individually located but shared characteristics (Gilligan 1982); as characteristics of organisations (Mills and Tancred 1992; Newman 1995; Parkin and Maddock 1995; Gherardi 1995); as a means of organising work (Iannello 1992); or as an ideology for (men's) practice (MacInnes 1998). The characteristics most frequently associated with (primarily white) masculinity are toughness, power, authority, rationality, instrumentality and objectivity. Those most often associated with femininity are relational, nurturance, care, co-operation, expressiveness and pursuit of equality and it is these characteristics to which I am referring when making broad statements about masculinity and femininity. Notions of masculinity are changing in an increasingly feminized or degendered age (Seidler 1997; Peterson 1998; MacInnes 1998; Faludi 1999). Yet, these characteristics persist as identifiers of gendered behaviours, organizations and structures. Occupations traditionally perceived to be 'men's' occupations tend to involve the expression of masculine characteristics whilst 'women's' occupations tend to be those associated with female ones. Whilst men and women, individually and collectively, do not necessarily behave according to the gendered roles attributed to their sex, there are, overall, closer associations between men and masculinity and women and femininity than there are between men and femininity and vice versa.



## **My narrative**

In undertaking this study I am not a disinterested observer. I remained a probation officer from 1979 to 1996 and my qualification to practice was that of social work. At the time of the government's efforts to deprofessionalize probation I was an Assistant Chief Probation Officer with responsibility for preparing a county probation service's response to the government's proposals. I and most of my colleagues interpreted the proposals as an attempt to both deprofessionalize and to remasculinize probation. It was clear that remasculinization by increasing salaries to those of other male dominated professions was not an option for the government at a time when public expenditure was capped and public sector wages were depressed. Without deprofessionalization therefore, remasculinization was unlikely to be achieved.

In drafting my own local probation service' response to the government proposals and in promoting probation's case for retaining training in higher education, I did not suggest that the rise in the number of qualified women was indicative of a successful training strategy. Nor did I suggest that it had led to an improvement in service delivery. I did not mention gender at all. Instead the response focussed on the need for highly skilled and educated practitioners, regardless of their sex. At the time I reflected that in spite of women's greater numbers in probation and our growing numbers in the more senior positions, I did not feel able to defend the position we had fought so long to achieve. Our growth seemed to have led to us losing our voices. It seemed that by joining the ranks of senior management, women had been co-opted into a corporate voice rather than giving greater voice to a previously marginalized perspective.

I did not find it particularly surprising that a right wing government should wish to remasculinize probation and it was consistent with its other policies over the previous five or six years. I did, however, want to better understand my own silence and that of my colleagues. I also wanted to know if the silence was confined to senior managers, a group that was still male dominated, or if it was a feature of the profession as a whole. It was these questions that prompted my interest in pursuing this research. I wanted to know if the construction of a credible profession was related to gender, positional authority or institutional or private voice. I wanted to know whether my observation about the loss of a feminist voice was individual or widespread and I wanted to understand the determinants of professional status. This study is therefore as much a journey in search of a theory to aid understanding, as it is to provide an empirical analysis of the construction of a credible profession and the relationship between this construction and gender.

The key to my understanding of the construction of probation as profession appeared to lie in my own silence contained in the defensive texts I was drafting for the service. It was in the silences that my personal views were located and therefore not represented and, to me, those silences were louder than the texts I was producing. I was seeking, therefore, the means to explore the silences and to identify a method of textual analysis that could contribute to achieving an understanding of what was not said but could have been said. And so it was to Foucault that I turned when considering the methodology and in particular his approach to the analysis of the social construction of madness (Foucault 1971). Foucault endeavoured to give voice to madness and to 'rescue' madness from

'experts' such as psychiatry. Whilst he has been subsequently criticised for merely supplanting one expert's construction of madness with another's, his own, (Derrida 1978), the value of his approach remains as a challenge to taken-for-granted constructions, constructions that constrain, categorise and determine relationships between people.

In giving words to silence, I too am creating entities that previously did not exist in texts. In deconstructing texts I am also reconstructing them in ways that also categorise and determine relationships. By using the voice of the third person, authors imply that the texts or their silences speak for themselves or have greater authority of revelation than the construction the authors make. Yet, even with the most rigorous analysis and reflexivity, the texts produced are as much a creation of an author as some self evident 'truth' waiting to be revealed through research (Foucault 1972). Just as I shall argue that a particular type of probation officer is created through discourse, I too am creating particular understandings or entities of profession and probation in this study. In order to open up for scrutiny my approach to the study and to acknowledge my role in constructing this narrative about probation, I have used the personal voice wherever possible. I use both the active and passive voice as a further indicator of creative responsibility. The different use of active and passive voice throughout this study also differentiates between actions undertaken by individuals, my self included, and the more passive collective adoption of discursive rules where the relationship between the speakers or writers and outcomes is less clear. Where it is clear to me that identifiable actors have caused particular effects then it will be stated as such but where the relationship is a discursive or hegemonic one then the passive tense is

generally used. This is not necessarily straightforward and the reader may conclude that I attribute more influence to either individuals or the power of discourse than can be argued from the texts. My intention in taking this approach is to open up the possibility that current hegemonic constructions of profession are just that; dominant constructions bound by time and circumstances and ones that can be challenged when we understand the rules.

### **Definition of key terms**

Central to my understanding of the making of the professions is an examination of the literature on the professions. Whilst recognising that definitions must be, of necessity, located at particular point in time and are formed for particular purposes, in studying the behaviour of occupations a 'rationale must be found for the separation of certain occupations from others and for their specific behaviour' (Torstendahl 1990: 1). Some professions may be more secure than others in their grasp of the title profession; some professions may have significantly higher status than others and the status may change over time and be viewed differently by different groups. But,

If X means only to refer to those few occupations recognised by almost everyone as profession, possessing very high prestige and a genuine monopoly over a set of widely demanded tasks, while Y means to refer as well to occupations which try to ameliorate their low prestige and weak economic position by referring to themselves as professions, then each is talking about incomparable categories and both the writers and the readers should be aware of the fact (Freidson 1983: 35).

The probation profession, on which I focus in this thesis, is not amongst the prestigious professions and, at the time of the research, its status had been declining since about 1990 or even earlier (see Chapter 3). Nevertheless, in its training arrangements, structures and social organisation it is not dissimilar to other professions. An exploration of the various terms used in the thesis is therefore needed in order to explain why probation is placed within the category 'profession' but outside those which are considered elite professions.

Although the possession of a certain number of traits does not automatically mean an occupation is considered to be a profession, the term profession has come to mean 'occupations based on advanced, or complex, or esoteric, or arcane knowledge' (Macdonald 1995:1). Gaining this knowledge requires training that is both located in higher education and on the job, the former providing the theory and the latter the practice. Furthermore the 'education is a prerequisite to employment' (Freidson 1986: 59). In this thesis it is those occupations that *require education and training located in a university as a prior condition to entry* to which I refer when using the term profession. Some occupations such as general management and marketing have university courses on the subject but such study is not a pre-requisite for entry into the occupation and in this research I am discounting such occupations as professions.

Many occupations, including general management and marketing mentioned above, are frequently referred to as professions by the lay public and in the media, in other words they have professional status. Professional status may be conferred by the public, the government, academics and others but not always for the same

reasons or in the same circumstances. Freidson (1983) describes profession as a 'folk' concept and Atkinson (1983) as a 'lay' term, meaning different things to different people at different times. For many people the term profession means any high status middle class occupation yet

'Doctors enjoy earnings that all but guarantee them upper-middle-class status or higher by mid-career. Social workers and other less well paid middle class professionals may find themselves living from paycheck to paycheck – middle class in education, but not in income' (Brint 1994: 66).

The notion of professions as social and economic *elites* therefore needs to be questioned.

In spite of the low status of many of the professions, and the greater rewards that can be achieved in other occupations, those occupations that have acquired the label profession seem reluctant to abandon it. Furthermore, some occupations such as management, which already have more social and economic status than many professions, aspire to professional status and have developed appropriate training and 'esoteric' knowledge as a means of achieving this end, thereby suggesting that there is still status to be gained from being perceived to be a member of a profession. Entrepreneurs or those with skills not learned at school or college may be able to compete financially and socially but not necessarily in the area the professions prize most, entry into training and therefore entry into the professions. Because professionals have invested so much in their educational resources, rather than their entrepreneurial, capital, artistic or physical resources they will try and preserve them. They are also ill equipped to compete in other

occupational markets and therefore protect their own, even as they preside over declining status and wealth.

The more egalitarian the opportunities for entry into the professions has become, and, as the number of professions and the number of professionals working in them have grown, the more hierarchical the social and economic status of professions has evolved in order to distinguish the 'full' or 'elite', from the 'semi' or 'aspiring'. Not all the professions confer equal economic or social status and there is a status hierarchy between professions and even within professions.

So, in this thesis then, I am using a number of terms in specific ways - a profession is an occupation which requires pre-entry training located in higher education. Professional status may also be conferred on other occupations that do not require pre-entry training but do require a good level of general education and have high social status. Occupations in the media, financial dealing, and PR might fall into this category. In the research I also refer to a 'hierarchy' of professions and this refers to the status professions are able to enjoy in relation to other professions. Within this conceptual framework probation is a profession but one with low social and economic (i.e. professional) status.

If, to be described as a profession, requires a university level pre-entry qualification, then the removal of that qualification or reducing its academic level to an undergraduate level is an act of *deprofessionalization*. Probation, in spite of all the claims made by professions about threats to their professional status, is the only example of this qualification removal occurring in the UK. The fact that the



decision was subsequently reversed suggests that deprofessionalization, in these terms is not only rare but is also difficult to achieve. Far more common is the risk or the reality of the loss of professional status, the downgrading of the esteem in which a profession is held and the subsequent loss or stagnation of income levels and other social and economic rewards. Where deprofessionalization has occurred, and here I am only discussing the loss of a professional qualification that occurred in probation from 1995-1997, the efforts taken by the occupation to regain a professional qualification and professional status can be conceptualised as *reprofessionalization* or part of a *reprofessionalizing* project.

The extent to which probation was or is a profession in its own right or a branch of social work is contested and this is reflected in the various discourses. In this thesis I treat probation as a distinct profession when examining those activities undertaken as part of the process of professionalizing. Probation has engaged in its own professional project, has its own professional associations and has not hitched its professionalizing activities to those of social work. However, I also use the term 'social work profession' or 'social work task' when the probation task is constructed as such in the discourse.

### **Approach to this thesis**

The existing literature on the professions (see Chapter 2) has focused on identifying either the common characteristics of professions (trait theory) or the process by which such characteristics have been used as a resource for status claims (professional project or power theories). This study considers in detail the essential characteristics of profession. However, rather than aiming to determine



what characteristics equal profession, as trait theorists have done, this study seeks to identify those characteristics and attributes of profession which probation brought to the fore in its efforts to regain professional status. Put another way, it sets out to examine those features which probation, as evidenced in its discourse, believe 'add up' to profession.

Thus, the focus of this research is the changing probation discourse as a resource for reprofessionalization. By discourse I mean any written, oral or pictorial communication relating to a subject and in this study, I mean the textual representations of and produced by probation for the purpose of reprofessionalizing. Professional situations are influenced by a number of discourses. Some compete and some may have more authority than others or be more powerful. Discourses may overlap and can impact on others and transform them. Discourses on crime, for example, are mediated through discourses on mental health, youth, drugs, gender and so on. The way a topic is framed includes or excludes other discourses and constrains options for conceptualising things in a different way. These bounded ways of thinking then constrain practice to that which can be contained within these frames of reference. For example, the creation of either an 'offender' to be reformed or a 'client' to be helped through the probation discourse brings with it different practices to which both the staff and offenders/clients conform or against which they rebel; such is the normative power of discourse.

In examining the characteristics of professions and the rules for their construction, I employ a gendered lens. I specifically address the relationship between gender

and the construction of probation as a profession. Almost all the existing literature on the professions treat the texts produced by professions as representative of something - events, values, opinions or accounts of activities. In examining these texts the focus of that literature is on the veracity of professional claims not on the contribution texts make to object creation (Etzioni 1969; Galanter 1983; Munghan and Thomas 1983). The approach taken in this study is to analyse such texts to reveal how professions are discursively constructed. This adds to our understanding of how professions make or achieve their status claims rather than whether such claims are justified. In other words, I examine the contribution the texts make to creating a new probation officer who will merit professional status, rather than pass judgement on whether the claims made by probation are justified.

The focus on probation is important not only because it is the only profession to have been deprofessionalized (temporarily) but also because of the ambivalence of some probation staff towards the professional project. Much of the existing literature on the professions assumes that professional status is desirable and that it will be actively pursued, or at least not rejected should it be bestowed upon an occupation. However, probation was an occupation that resisted professionalization even whilst it was becoming a profession (Page 1992) (see also Chapter 3). Such a stance has been influenced by the fact that probation works with marginalized groups, perhaps the most marginalized groups in our society: those who are imprisoned, predominantly poor, and disproportionately black and with fewer life chances than most. From this experience and their social work training, probation officers are aware of and have been part of the

critical discourse on professions. Thus, over the years probation has, at times, shared many of the features of more recently developed occupations such as domestic violence or HIV/AIDS workers which are not seeking to professionalize and which eschew professional status (Dominelli and McLeod 1989; Deverell and Sharma 1999).

Yet probation did professionalize and later, during the 1990s, undertook a re-professionalizing project when its status was threatened. It therefore offers a remarkable opportunity to examine more closely the professionalizing, deprofessionalizing and reprofessionalizing cycle of a 'mature', if hesitant, profession. It also offers an opportunity to examine the fortunes of a profession as women came to predominate and the relationship between gender and professional status.

### **Structure of thesis**

My thesis is that professionalism and masculinism are closely related and that the evidence from probation suggests that professionalization is masculinization. There are three main stages in my argument. Stage one examines the existing literature on how professions are created and the relationship between professional status and gender. The second stage seeks to understand probation's history through a gendered lens, charting its rise and fall as its gendered composition changed. This stage also considers the government's response to the profession's changing composition. The final stage analyses the relationship between gender (masculinity) and profession as demonstrated by probation in the texts produced by the profession in its attempts to regain professional status.

In Chapter 2 I critically appraise the dominant theories of profession and reason that our understanding of the professions is incomplete without a gendered dimension. As the existing dominant theories have been developed through empirical studies of the elite male professions, I question whether they are equally applicable to women's professions<sup>1</sup> or remain relevant if the gender balance of a profession changes. I show that studies of professions assume professions to be those occupations with the highest social standing and rewards, relegating other occupations with similar characteristics but lacking the high social and economic rewards as 'semi', 'would be' or 'not yet' professions. I discuss the gendered construction of profession in the literature and how female professions are constructed as different to and lesser than those occupations more frequently awarded the title profession.

Chapter 2 also considers the theoretical contribution derived from research on women's professions. This ascribes women's exclusion from the elite professions and their relegation to other occupational fields as the reason for their lower status. These exclusionary theories take forward our knowledge about the relationship between gender and the professions and they provide an historically situated rationale for women's current occupational status. However, exclusionary theories, whilst acknowledging gender differences across professional occupations, presuppose that profession is a gender-neutral construct. They assume that if barriers to women's advancement are removed, women's predominance in a profession will have no impact on its status.

Chapter 3 focuses on probation. I trace the development of probation from its early days as a 'police court mission' through its years as a profession with some status, to its decline towards the end of the last century. I discuss its fortunes in relation to its gendered composition drawing out the linkages between these two phenomena. The chapter takes probation's story up to the point of the government's decision to deprofessionalize it. Further discussion of this decision and analysis of how this was expressed comes later in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4 outlines the methods of the research and the approach taken to discourse analysis. In order to understand the discursive rules under which the profession operated, I analyse documents prepared specifically as part of the reprofessionalizing project. I also consider documents prepared for other purposes but which offer a contribution to that project. The research covers the years 1987-1997, although some key documents produced after this are included. There is a particular focus on the years 1994-1997 when reprofessionalizing activities were at their peak.

Chapters 5 and 6 are devoted to the findings of this research, Chapter 5 begins with the government's view that its objectives for probation would be more readily achieved with a more overtly male and masculine workforce and a less professional one. In articulating the characteristics of a desired probation officer, the government identified characteristics generally associated with men, thereby indicating that it was masculinity that they valued. In analysing how probation responded to this challenge, this thesis focuses on the construction of probation in

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this thesis I use the term 'women's profession' (or women's occupation) when

its training discourse. Furthermore, I reveal the relationship between gender and profession in the reconstruction of probation as a profession. I examine how, discursively, the profession responded to the threats to its status and how it presented to the external world as an occupation meriting professional status. I analyse the construction of probation officers and the probation task, and also the construction of offenders and victims of crime. I explore how these constructions were presented to the various audiences the profession hoped to influence in their campaign.

Chapter 7 analyses the findings and their implications they have for the existing literature on and the study of the professions. I conclude that the relationship between gender and the construction of a profession is clear but not simple. It intersects with class and race and also is temporally bounded, reflecting current expectations about gender and occupational opportunities.

Chapter 8 draws together the conclusions from the research and the contribution it makes to existing knowledge. It also relates the research findings to recent changes in the occupational landscape and draws out their implications for future practice and further research.

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referring to professions in which women dominate, numerically.

## **CHAPTER 2: Professional status**

This research is about the study of one profession's attempts to improve its occupational status during a period of decline, the focal point being probation's reconstruction of the profession and the professional task in order to do so. An analysis of this construction will reveal those elements and characteristics probation promoted to support status claims. In this chapter I consider the theories that might underpin this construction. I am concerned here with those theories that offer explanations of how occupations come to be labelled professions and acquire professional status or how professions increase their status. I set out the two major theories of professionalization and explore the extent to which they, and their subsequent variations, adequately explain how professional status is achieved and maintained.

Acquiring professional status has been primarily attributed to either the possession of a number of traits or characteristics – trait theory, or the successful implementation of a professional project during which control over the education and credentialing mechanisms is secured – project or power/process theory. In this chapter I examine the contribution of these theories to both academic and lay understandings of the term profession and the extent to which they inform contemporary thinking about the professions and the organization of professional labour. My thesis is that profession is a gendered construction and in this chapter I also explore the extent to which trait and project theories can be read across to women's professions or women's occupations. I judge the applicability of the theories to women's attempts to gain professional status and consider what further



theoretical work might assist in our understanding of the relationship between professional status and gender.

### **Origins of the professions**

The origins of the word profession as a type of occupation derive from the Anglo Saxon use of the word to 'profess' as in to take a vow or to promise as part of joining a religious order. This sense of joining a community or making a lifetime commitment to an organisation that requires certain behaviours and demeanours continues today and for many people profession means a form of 'vocation'.

A man who leaves a profession, once he is fully trained, licensed and initiated, is something of a renegade in the eyes of his fellows: in the case of the priest, even in the eyes of laymen (Hughes 1963: 657).

According to Cogan, 'the earliest recorded use of the word profession to mean a learned vocation was in 1541' (Cogan 1953: 34), adding that (and quoting from the 1933 shorter Oxford English dictionary) 'as early as 1576 its meaning had already been generalised to indicate "any calling or occupation by which a person habitually earns his living"' (Ibid.). It was not until the industrial revolution that the professions became a distinct occupational class and the term came to be widely used to describe those occupations (law, medicine, the church and the army) suitable for the impecunious second sons of the aristocracy where the qualification to practice was that of being a gentleman.

As the professions expanded with industrialisation more men, and later some women, were able to receive appropriate training in the technicalities of the job



and the conduct expected of them, thereby linking their social and economic status with that of the 'gentlemen' who initially occupied these roles. Access to the traditional professions was restricted to men through legislation and control of entry into the universities and, although women gained entry throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and their numbers have increased considerably in the last twenty years, the 'elite' professions are still dominated by men and professions dominated by women have less status and economic rewards (EOC 2001).

### **Trait approach**

Although the word profession has been in common usage since the industrial revolution, it is a concept that remains highly contested and its meaning changes over time. Valued occupational characteristics mutate as required skills and employment patterns change and as occupations relate differently to other social groups and structures. Key to the lay person's definition of a profession is an occupation that they, as non-experts relying on experts, can trust (Freidson 1988; Wrigley and McKevitt 1994). When the professions were made up of 'gentlemen' it was claimed that they could be trusted simply because they were gentlemen, thereby cementing the association between trustworthiness and social class. As the numbers in the professions grew they included others from different social classes who might not be 'trustworthy' by reason of class alone. The trust relationship was then established through codes of ethics, training in the skills required for the job with the development of a distanced and 'objective', professional demeanour.

The traits asserted by earlier sociologists to be those that distinguished the professions from other occupations can be summarised as - the application of specialised, abstract knowledge obtained through long periods of training; occupational control over training and licensing of practitioners; peer group review, evaluation and discipline; an altruistic service or collective orientation; and, the work determined by the occupation rather than the government or the client. (Cogan 1953; Goode 1960; Greenwood 1957; Etzioni 1969). In Cogan's extensive survey of the literature on the various definitions of the professions he acknowledged these as the dominant traits associated with profession but concluded that

A profession is a vocation whose practice is founded upon an understanding of the theoretical structure of some department of learning or science, and upon the abilities accompanying such understanding. This understanding and these abilities are applied to the vital practical affairs of man. The practices of the profession are modified by knowledge of a generalised nature and by the accumulated wisdom and experience of mankind, which serve to correct the errors of specialism. The profession, serving the vital needs of man, considers its first ethical imperative to be altruistic service to the client (Cogan 1953: 48-49).

This suggests that it is the importance of the activity, the 'vital needs of man', that distinguish professions from occupations. In rejecting both occupational licensing and control as a determining trait of profession he acknowledges that those occupations called profession were controlled from within. Greenwood, on the other hand, also includes authority as a determining characteristic, authority exercised through individual relationships with clients in matters relating to their

case and one that is endorsed and supported by the broader community. For example, authority in relation to the individual patient is supported by the widespread expectation that an individual will follow 'doctor's orders' and the doctor has the authority to 'order' in contrast to the homeopath or the nurse who might merely advise.

Goode argued a two tiered approach to understanding professionalism. The first tier of 'core characteristics' being 'prolonged specialized training in a body of abstract knowledge, and a collectivity or service orientation' identified occupations as professions (Goode 1960: 903). A second set of ten characteristics, deriving from the core characteristics as the occupation became increasingly professionalized, were those that delineated the more elite professions. These characteristics included licensure, professional autonomy and control over training. He also included the characteristic of the profession being a 'terminal' occupation in that people remained within the profession for life and that members strongly identified with the profession. However he, later, said that perhaps the only defining characteristic was that of trust (Goode 1969).

Key to the trait approach to the professions is the combination of an identifiable body of knowledge coupled with practical skills and exclusion of the unlicensed. The combination of knowledge and skills without monopolistic control over who can undertake the work of the occupation leaves an occupation exposed to the occupational market where services can be purchased from any competent practitioner. Technical knowledge is available from books and access to the professions would be open to a wide range of people were it not for the

requirement of prior training in its practical application, and the absence of a high degree of academic training, would suggest a craft rather than a profession. Achieving a particular balance between the intellectual and the practical or the primary route to achieving profession is not important (Hughes 1963).

The traits claimed as those inherent to professions were based on the characteristics of the 'gentlemen' who occupied professional roles. As these traits were developed as indicators of profession during a period in history when the daughters, sisters and wives of gentlemen rarely worked for money, they reflected dominant upper class male norms of the time.

Whilst sociologists, as I shall discuss further below, have ceased to employ a taxonomic approach to the professions, occupations continue to reference traits as indicators of profession and major milestones on the route to professionalization. Whether or not the traits associated with profession exist or are significant factors in determining occupational positions on a status hierarchy, they are treated by many occupations as though they do. If occupations cannot persuade the government that at least some of the traits identified by the proponents of trait theory are in place, the granting of professional autonomy seems unlikely. Traits associated with profession serve an identity function for professions and 'would be' professions and those who rely on their services.

The existence of a code of ethics and an avowed collective orientation, supported by long periods of training amounts to a contract between the professional and the user or commissioner of services (Freidson 1994; 2001). The contract may be

implied; it might also be vague and somewhat difficult to enforce but it is a contract none the less. Professionals, and their clients, do not always behave according to the conditions of the contract, and the conditions of the contract may not always be in the best interests of either the profession or the clients, self-regulation for instance. However, the contract, as implied by a professional qualification, forms the working agreement under which the exchange is understood and enacted. Those that use personal professional services know how to behave when they visit a doctor, solicitor or social worker and they all share an understanding about what a professional can and cannot do for them or to them. The fact that breaches of this trust relationship are so widely publicised - sexual contact by professionals with clients, using clients funds for purposes not agreed by them or continuing to practice in ways that colleagues have shown to be ineffective - indicates the level of expected trust both parties subscribe to.

Additionally, in creating a monopoly for professional services, the government needs to be assured of the occupation first meeting certain criteria and

Both the institutional characteristics of its members as their formal education, must confirm to official criteria of profession. Cosmetic changes on the institutional face which an occupation presents to the world may not be enough for official recognition. (Freidson 1983: 29).

For the government, which contracts with professionals for services, particularly in the public sector, traits provide the sub-clauses needed to assure the delivery of services as intended. So, whilst traits may be myths or presentational devices (Wilding 1982), they appear to exist for the lay public, the government and the

professions either as milestones on route to profession or as targets to be achieved in order to gain or maintain professional status.

### *Critics of the trait approach*

Having, or so they thought, identified a number of traits to delineate the professions from occupations, trait theorists were quickly discredited by academic colleagues. During the 1960s and 1970s a more critical appraisal of the professions led to dismissal by sociologists of trait theory (Wilensky 1964; Freidson 1973; Roth 1974; Klegon 1978). Some disputed that trait theory was a legitimate area for study and that trait theorists, in studying the 'elite' professions, mainly law and medicine, uncritically identified these occupations as professions, thus perpetuating their status and effectively excluding others. Or, as more tartly put by Klegon,

Occupations may differ along such factors as status, degree of control, organization, influence and so forth. However, just because an occupation may become idealized and reified in the social consciousness, there is no need for sociologists to do the same (Klegon 1978: 268).

The attributes of profession, both cultural and educational, could only be acquired either in a university or as an 'apprentice' to another professional, access to both being restricted to the middle classes (Freidson 1973; Rueschemeyer 1964). Unsurprisingly then, the traits most valued by the professions 'seem to be in fact aspects of upper-class and upper-middle class life and sub-culture' (Rueschemeyer 1964:30). Some academics considered professionalization as a middle class version of unionisation, following a consensual rather than conflict model (Haug and Sussman 1973). Others suggested that the traits were only

presentational devices to persuade the public of professional claims in order to be awarded the status and rewards of profession (Mungham and Thomas, 1983; Galanter, 1983, Wilding, 1982).

Critics of trait theory, whilst acknowledging its class base, have failed to notice the gendered base of the resources used to achieve trait accumulation, assuming, just as trait theorists had before them, that to be professional was to be male. Klegon, for example, in noting that

It is the relationship of an occupation to societal arrangements of power, and the way in which those relationships affect the social meaning of an occupation, that affect the ability of an occupation to obtain and maintain professional occupational control (Klegon 1978: 273)

assumed that occupational resources, power and government interests were class based but failed to even consider whether or not they might also be gendered.

#### *Trait as a neglected area of enquiry*

Traits continue to have an important ideological function for the professions and to have meaning for those that use professional services or purchase them on behalf of others. It is therefore curious that there has been so little recent interest by sociologists (apart from Freidson) in the functions that traits serve for those who subscribe to them. It seems that Roth's oft quoted statement below provided such a strong criticism of those who explored the characteristics of professions that to continue to seek to identify professional traits would be to immediately mark one's self out as a supporter of powerful elites:



Sociologists who focus on lists of attributes do not study this process, but participate in it. They have become the dupe of established professions (helping them justify their dominant position and its pay off) and arbiters of occupations on the make, keeping score instead of observing and interpreting the behaviour involved in the process of scoring (Roth 1974:17).

He goes on to lambaste trait theorists further by stating

Perhaps one reason why so many sociologists involved in occupational studies fall into this trap is that they too are in an occupation on the make and they have an interest in seeing how they can increase their score in relation to other occupations (Ibid.)

The intention of Roth (and others – Johnson 1972, Klegon 1978, Wilding 1982, for example) in making such acerbic comments may have been to discourage sociologists from uncritically accepting the elite professions' list of traits as those that count. In doing so trait analysis and trait promotion have become conflated.

Trait analysis has effectively been lost from the study of the professions. With it has been lost the opportunity to consider the racial, class and gender characteristics of those occupations that are able to achieve high social and economic status and the relationship between social background and professional status. Furthermore, if no characteristics of profession exist, other than the ability to persuade others to grant high status and rewards, then gender is relevant only as a resource in the professionalizing project rather than as a characteristic of profession. Given the very evident economic and status differentials between male and female dominated professions, such an assumption is premature. By



failing to consider gender as a potential trait of profession, sociologists continue to uncritically assume profession as a gender-neutral entity.

Roth himself demonstrates this by arguing that 'engineering is a profession – we all *know* that' (italics in the original)(1974: 16), whilst social work is 'one of America's most anxiously upwardly mobile occupations' (Ibid.:17). Roth's influential, rhetorical style immediately categorises male dominated engineering as profession and female dominated social work as 'semi' profession arguing a 'common sense' or lay perspective, in other words inviting us to *know* that social work is something lesser than a profession. Without irony, Roth then goes on to state that 'when uncritical commonsense definitions dominate the field, circular and ad hominem arguments proliferate' (Ibid.). In 'knowing' what is or is not a profession, we make assumptions about the characteristics and traits of profession and, whilst this is a feature of our understanding, it is a legitimate area for further exploration. Far from supporting professions in the maintenance of their status and rewards, if examined critically, trait analysis may contribute to an alternative understanding of the way in which occupations become professions and gain or lose social and economic standing.

#### *A Derivative form of trait theory*

Whilst, amongst sociologists, trait theory may hold little explanatory power for the acquisition of professional status by certain occupational groups, a derivative form is still used by many to place professions on a status hierarchy and, in particular, when seeking to explain gendered status differentials. Interestingly, this is done by the very academics (except perhaps Etzioni) who have dismissed

traits as indicators of profession. The categorisation of women's professions such as teaching and nursing as 'semi' professions has been variously attributed to lack of autonomy from the client and the government (Freidson 1970; Etzioni 1969; Elliott 1972); lack of control over occupational boundaries and work (Larson 1977; Wilding 1982); control by other occupations (Freidson 1970); their screening role prior to presenting cases to higher status specialist professionals (Abbott 1981), or their location in 'high devotion, low power' professions (Rueschemeyer 1983: 137). Others have argued that 'mediated' professions; i.e. those that mediate between the individual and the state Johnson (1972), or 'bureau' professionals i.e. those professionals located in agencies (Parry and Parry 1979), tend to have a lower status. Jamous and Peloille (1970) assert that the 'indeterminacy/technicality' ratio or balance is what distinguishes professions on a status hierarchy, and those which require a higher level of judgement coupled with effective intervention methods will be more valued. More recently, as social power has shifted increasingly towards the scientific community, Brint suggests that the replacement of 'social trustee professionalism' with 'expert professionalism' (Brint 1994: 37) has led to increased status for those with 'theoretical reason and practical power' (Ibid.: 40) i.e. scientists and technologists.

Whilst each of these arguments are presented as being gender neutral by their exponents, just as trait theorists before them, they have sought to identify particular characteristics of successful professions assuming the characteristics are intrinsic to the nature of the job rather than derive from gendered roles. As Fox Keller notes:

the scientific population is, even now, a population that is overwhelmingly male, in itself a consequence rather than a cause of the attribution of masculinity to scientific thought (Fox Keller 1983:188).

Derivative trait theorists, in their search to explain status differentials, acknowledge that women tend to be located in lower status professions and that low status professions tend to be dominated by women. They do not, however, question whether the status differentials directly result from the gender of the occupants, from a gendered professionalizing process or a construction of profession that is designed to attract men and exclude women.

In much the same way as trait theorists before them, derivative trait theorists suggest that the intrinsic nature of the job determines the status of the occupants rather than their prior class or social standing. Freidson comes closer to acknowledging the relationship between high occupational status and gender noting that:

This hierarchy, too is likely to be reflected in the social origins of the workers. In the grossest comparison between physicians and para medical workers, the latter are to a disproportionate degree women and of the less valued ethnic, racial and religious groups in the United States (Freidson 1988: 53).

Even so Freidson falls short of suggesting the reason for the status differential might be related more to the workers social origins than other factors.

Regardless of the theories sociologists have suggested for the low status of women's professions, the professions, themselves, act as though they believe gender may be an important determining factor. Kravetz outlines social work's efforts to recruit men 'into the field as a means of upgrading the image' by developing group work and community work which were more attractive to men (Kravetz 1976: 422). Williams (C)(1995) also notes that social work, nursing, teaching and librarianship have at various times attempted to attract men to these professions in order to increase status but with only limited success whilst men have risen through the ranks quickly and through displaying traditional masculine qualities.

If occupational status is closely associated with the pre-existing social status of those entering the occupation, when the status of those in or entering an occupation does not match the profile of those in high status occupations, acquiring the traits of profession (the traditional ones or those more recently identified) may achieve only limited, if any, success. Occupations might possess all the signifiers of profession but may not necessarily be awarded the social and economic status generally associated with the term and without considering the gender, class and racial composition of an occupation as key variables, such comparisons only provide a rationale for gendered occupational divisions.

In much the same way that professional traits were identified by the beneficiaries of an exclusive occupational system, traits identified to explain the lower status of female professions have been identified by (primarily) male academics. These academics are also the beneficiaries of system that valorises masculine attributes

over feminine ones and they too, might be contributing to ensuring the maintenance of the status of those professions already highly regarded.

### **The professional project**

I now turn to the theoretical explanations of the process through which occupations gain occupational control and persuade others that they should be awarded professional status. Approaches to understanding professions that centre on the development of the professions as political, economic and social elites, view traits as resources for gaining market power rather than an attribute (Johnson 1972; Larson 1977; Parkin 1979; Wilding, 1982). Johnson says that no professional traits exist other than occupational control

professionalism then, becomes redefined as a peculiar type of occupational control rather than an expression of the inherent nature of particular occupations (Johnson 1972: 45)

and the professional 'project' is the means of gaining that control.

In discussing the process of professionalization, I am using the conceptual tool of the professional project primarily based on the work of Larson (1977). Whilst some aspects of Larson's theorising are problematic, especially in relation to gender, the explanatory power of the professional project remains significant. The professional project as a means of gaining occupational and social power represented a paradigmatic shift in thinking about the professions and the academic task became that of revealing the process of achieving professional status rather than identifying the features that separated one type of occupation from another or explained status differentials. Larson's general theory of the

professions as a professional project has come to dominate, with some adaptations, sociological thinking about the professions and has not been superseded in any significant way (Dingwall and Lewis 1983; Macdonald 1995).

Larson maintains that the professional project is

an attempt to translate one order of scarce resources - special knowledge and skills - into another - social and economic rewards. To maintain scarcity implies a tendency to monopoly: monopoly of expertise in the market, monopoly of status in a system of stratification. The focus on the constitution of professional markets leads to comparing different professions in terms of the "marketability" of their specific cognitive resource (Larson 1977: xvii).

This implies that there must be a degree of scarcity in the availability of skills. This can be achieved through high entry thresholds, limited access to professional training and knowledge that is not easily transferable. Skills that are out of date or no longer valued will reduce the marketability of the occupation regardless of the market controls the profession is able to exercise. For example theological training in the traditional Christian denominations in the UK is no longer as 'marketable' as it once was.

Larson describes early professionals as professional 'entrepreneurs' working to expand and control the market for their services in much the same way that artisan guilds worked collectively for the benefit of the whole trade rather than just the individual within it. The social mobility of members was dependent on the social mobility of the occupation rather than individual effort. The strategy

for implementing the professional project might not be discerned until after the event. Nonetheless it was a 'planned undertaking' (Larson 1977: 1) and 'collective effort was needed on the part of the actual or potential sellers of services to capture and control expanding markets' (Ibid.: 10). This was achieved through 'collective credit rating' (Ibid.: 69) of 'social credit' (Ibid.: 50) arising from guarantees of occupational competence, controlled by the occupation and, supposedly, independent of the social status of the occupants and accessible to all who met 'objective' entry criteria.

For Larson, control over training is crucial to the success of the professional project

The singular characteristic of professional power is, however, that the profession has the exclusive privilege of defining *both* the content of its knowledge and the legitimate conditions of access to it, *while the unequal distribution of knowledge protects and enhances this power*. (emphasis in the original) (1997: 48).

To gain public credibility, the knowledge base has to be scientific (or learned in the case of law) and entry into the professions has to have the appearance of an entry system based on academic merit. As training for the professions moved away from the apprenticeship model and into the universities the role of educators was advanced and they began to have a more important role in determining appropriate knowledge, its codification and speaking for the profession. Thus completing the circle between knowledge, training and practice.



The key to occupations controlling occupational competence lies in the 'production of the producers'; 'the professional must be adequately trained and socialized so as to provide recognizably distinct services for exchange on the professional market' (Larson 1977: 14). As professions develop the role of the educators becomes more powerful:

A profession's dependence on formal institutions of training enhances the role of educators, who are increasingly identified with the theoretical rather than practical side of the profession. As the educators themselves develop a consciousness of their interests and become concerned with professional autonomy and professional privileges, their role increases in the profession as a whole...educators will be recognised as spokesmen for the profession as a whole (Ibid.: 44).

The control of training is therefore considered an essential milestone in the professionalizing project.

In developing further the relationship between training and professionalization, Larson and others (for example Freidson 1988 and Rueschemeyer 1983) contend that the length of training is that required to enhance practitioners' market value on completion, not the length of time needed to produce the skills required for the job. It has served to preserve the professions for those of the wealthier middle classes as black people, working class people and (previously) women are less likely to be able to afford long training periods prior to earning an income.

Even when access to training has been gained, not all members of the profession will be considered to have the same authority and knowledge:



only the knowers themselves will define what are valid subjects for knowledge and valid criteria of pertinence and truth.....the unequal ability to produce or appropriate authoritative statements distinguishes the leaders from the led, the official from the unofficial spokesmen, the orthodox from the marginals or the dissenters, the prestigious from the more obscure institutional roles and even, after all that, the talented from the less talented (Larson 1977: 31).

Larson's premise is that expertise, the cognitive basis of the occupation, is the most powerful resource at its disposal and to professionalize, occupations need to ensure sponsors believe a high degree of technical training is required which can only be delivered by other experts. Thus is it crucial for the profession to gain control of training so that those outside it do not know if it is technically demanding or esoteric in its content and cannot judge the competence of those within it. As only the state can legislate for the licensing of professionals and their monopoly provision, the support of the state is also crucial, especially in taking action against unlicensed practitioners. In believing that a successful outcome of professional intervention can only be achieved through the employment of licensed, trained practitioners, employers and governments effectively create a monopoly for the profession and therefore find it difficult to intervene thereafter.

Professional project theorists have maintained that in undertaking the professional project, occupations are seeking to achieve improved economic and social rewards. There may be set backs to the project, it may only be achieved over a long period of time with steady effort and some occupations may never

professionalize. There is an assumption that success is dependent on the process and project management skills and some have gone as far as to suggest the rules for project management. Wilensky, for example, identified five stages of professional development which can be summarised as - undertaking the work as a full-time job, establishing a training school for the occupation, the formation of a professional association, gaining the support of law for the monopoly provision of services and the development of a code of ethics (Wilensky 1964). As the number of professions has increased, so too has the competition for professional status and the activities needed to successfully complete a professional project. The inclusion of doctoral programmes, university chairs and increasing specialisation might also now be perceived as a necessary part of the project management process (Becher 1990; Elzinga 1990).

Larson and others who have concentrated on the professional project as a means of gaining occupational status, just as trait theorists before them, have analysed successful elite professions as the ideal and used them to retrospectively identify the characteristics of successful project management. Periods of difficulty when professional aspirations may have been contested are presented as 'blips' in the professional project. Occupations such as engineering that possess professional traits but lack the status of the elite professions, are assumed to have acquired some but not all the status of profession. They might yet make it to the ranks of the elite professions if only their project management techniques were copied from more successful professions (Larson 1977). In other words, these 'not yet' professions are not allowed to undermine the professional project thesis by suggesting that there might be occupations that cannot rise beyond their current

position because of the class or gender basis of their entrants. Nor is there an exploration of the possibility that others may lose their professional status should the class composition of entrants change to that of a lower social status.

Larson argues that the prior status of those entering the profession is irrelevant (other than those who have a high social status are more likely to be well educated and have greater professionalizing opportunities).

What is important is that attributes of "gentility" and references to older legitimizations of privilege had to be incorporated as sources of social credit and guarantees of ethically (Larson 1977: 71);

thereby suggesting that aspirants to professional status will be successful if they emulate those that have already attained it. However, the indications are that the development of the professions established a new middle class but that this class did not possess the same social standing as gentlemen, its status was 'middling', as was the status of those who entered it. Over a decade later, Larson acknowledges that 'Gentlemanly status' might be a resource for the professionalizing project (Larson 1990) but still supports the view of meritocratic, as in professional project management skills, class mobility.

In exploring the relationship between status and successful professionalization, Larson marginalises gender. Her studies relate only to occupations dominated by men. Project theory is presented as a universal theory with the assumption that the findings also apply to women's professions. Larson noted that engineering failed to transcend its working class image in its attempts to gain professional status having failed to demonstrate an 'appearance of gentility'. Whilst the

appearance of being a gentleman may no longer be a necessary pre-requisite for the title profession, aspiring professions or professionals may still seek to cultivate the appearance of those who have already acquired the status; i.e. to present as high status professions. Larson's theory would suggest that if women's professions behave like men's, as representing the 'older legitimizations of privilege', then they too, would acquire the same status, regardless of the actual sex of those occupying the roles. This implies that it is not the reality but the appearance that is important in establishing credentials to professional status. It may be possible for working class white men to overcome any social or economic disadvantages and pass as middle class (and become middle class on gaining professional status). It is much more difficult for women to present as men or black women and men to present as white men even if, when doing profession on a day to day basis, their behaviour has all the appearance of being practised by a white man. Those that might wish to retain their gendered or racial identities will appear to be even further from the professional ideal. Yet, Larson and other project theorists do not examine women's professions or consider the application of her theory to less dominant social groups. Although she acknowledges that gender may be a resource to occupations in their pursuance of a professional project, the relevance of Larson's theory to women's occupations remains a significant gap in the research on the professions.

### **Expert professionalism**

More recently, Brint (1994) has observed that professional status is also awarded to occupations with a high degree of technical knowledge which may not require professional training. He does not explore how these occupations come to be

perceived as professional and assumes their professional status without comment, arguing that it is a 'new type' of professional. Like trait and project theorists he is firstly deciding which occupations should be called profession and then, retrospectively, identifying the characteristics that would support the classification.

He suggests that there is no need for a code of ethics and (using the words of one of his interviewees) these occupations, expert professions, offer a service that 'is no more important to society than the work of an electrician or an automechanic' (Brint 1994: 10). The argument for status and rewards comes from the level of technical difficulty of the tasks and the consequent knowledge to achieve it. These new professionals do not expect, necessarily, their work to be socially useful or to have a monopoly. They can justify selling their skills on the open market and still be called professional i.e. they subscribe neither to trait or project theories.

In noting the wide range of occupations that are now called professions due to the exponential rise in the call for professional services, Brint observes or suggests the stratification by 'marketable skills and location in resource-rich organizations' (Brint 1994:11). By implication, public sector professionals would be lower on the hierarchy except in those areas 'that are tied to technological and business interests' (Ibid.). Brint is primarily referring to America where 'expert professionalism needed no sharp distinction from business enterprise, and it required less separation from the idea of perusing trade for a profit' (Ibid.:9) but

the parallels in the UK are becoming increasingly evident. He suggests, uncritically, that the stratification is justified on the basis that

the success of expert knowledge, moreover, are frequently spectacular - from the erection of the monumental work of modern engineering through the prolonged of life through medical science Ibid:8-9).

Brint's dismissal of women's professions to the periphery 'occupations like school teaching and social work with dubious technical capacities' demonstrate as did his predecessors, that sociologists, in theorising how professions gain and lose status assume both intrinsic and greater worth in the tasks and skills required of male professions (Ibid.). Brint does not consider whether technical expertise is valorised because men dominate the field or social trusteeism is devalued because women can now lay claim to those professions in which it dominates.

### **Women's exclusion from the elite professions**

Project theorists, although they recognise that men, individually and collectively, bring more resources, such as political influence and finance, to the professionalizing process, assume that if women's professions had the same resources and project management skills, the outcomes might be similar. Witz too, in examining women's professional projects, takes a similar view.

men and women had unequal access to the various resources which were necessary to stake a successful claim to 'professional status' in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' as men were able to 'collectively organise and construct organisational forms in the new sphere of civil society (Witz 1992: 194).

Men's resources, particularly education, were used not only to promote their claims to professional status but also to exclude women and it was the 'credentialist tactics for professionalization which provided the most effective means of excluding women' (Ibid.). Examples of this include the case of Elizabeth Blackwell whose American and French medical qualifications allowed her to be registered as a doctor in England in 1859 leading to the British Medical Association rule changes disallowing foreign degrees (Anderson and Zinsser 1988). Once women were able to overcome these barriers their inclusion in medicine was slow but assured.

The professions have used exclusionary tactics to secure, the entry of their own class whilst appearing to have an entry system based on merit (Johnson 1972; Freidson 1988). They have also used their recruitment, selection and training systems and entry requirements to exclude on the basis of gender (Parkin 1979; Hearn 1982; Walby 1986; Witz 1992) and race (Bryan, Dadze and Scafe 1985; Bruegel 1994a). The professional project might therefore be a means of achieving social closure (Weber 1978; Parkin 1979; Murphy 1983), in order to protect the status of those already included.

Gendered exclusionary tactics have also been noted in trade unions (Walby 1986; Cockburn 1995) and particular industries, for example criminal justice agencies (Martin and Jurik 1996), the oil industry (Mearns and Flin 1996) and management (Kanter 1977; Crompton 1994; Coyle 1995). Where exclusion cannot be maintained, segregation has taken place and women tend to be found in particular types of jobs, generally at the lower status end of the discipline (Kreckel 1980;



Acker and Van Houten 1992; Savage 1992; Zimneck 1992; Coyle 1995). Black women, in particular, are disproportionately located lower down the organisational hierarchy in comparison with white women with similar qualifications and experience (Bruegel 1994b). The gendered division of labour is well documented across all occupations (Walby 1986; Acker 1992; Burton 1992; Cockburn 1995) and in the professions (Witz 1992; Macdonald 1995).

More recently, high status professions, particularly law and medicine, have discouraged women through excessively long training periods (Vicinus 1985; Witz 1992; Macdonald 1995). Some occupations, particularly management, have succeeded in protecting male domination through hostile organizational cultures and working patterns that conflict with family life. Cultures of excessive work hours and expectations of continuous availability, make such occupations unattractive to women and difficult to sustain if they have children (Kanter 1977; Coyle 1995; Itzin 1995; Parkin and Maddock 1995).

#### *Constructing women's professions.*

In order to analyse gendered professional exclusionary processes, Witz developed (advancing the work of Parry and Parry (1976) and Parkin (1979)) a conceptual model of strategies for occupational closure (Witz 1992). Parkin had previously identified the processes of usurpation and exclusion as means of social closure whilst Witz' model describes the continuous pressures exerted by dominant occupational groups to prevent occupational inclusion of subordinated groups alongside inter-occupational demarcation strategies to maintain control over task boundaries. In turn subordinated or excluded occupations attempt to exclude



others from their own occupational/professional sphere whilst at the same time attempting to usurp the super-ordinate occupation. Both super and subordinate groups use demarcation strategies to establish their own exclusionary shelter. Witz showed how medicine had excluded women and demarcated and subordinated women's occupations such as nursing and midwifery. In turn, nursing and other women's professions demarcated their occupational roles and attempted to preserve the trained functions of nursing from other potential usurpers. The focus of Witz' work is on gender, masculinity, as a powerful resource for maintaining and increasing power in the professional sphere, supported by patriarchal social structures. In building on class and project theories Witz demonstrates the activities professions undertake to achieve professionalization through exclusion and demarcation strategies.

Witz' analysis improves our understanding of how some professions came to be either male or female dominated and how some women's professions, in order to demarcate their work from other professions or occupations, underlined the feminine nature of the tasks. So, whilst the elite professions emphasised their gentlemanly qualities and later their altruism and service to others, the female professions claimed a different set of characteristics in order to create their own particular occupational niche. These characteristics often related to (middle class) feminine 'modesty' or moral 'superiority' (Manton 1976; Vicinus 1985) or constructing tasks as those associated with women in the home (Vicinus 1985; Zimmeck 1992; Witz 1992). Just as the elite professions were male dominated and masculine in style, the female professions were feminine in the characteristics they portrayed with an emphasis on care and nurture. This was to have

considerable consequences over the years as feminine characteristics came to be associated with the semi professions (Wilensky 1968). In order to demarcate an area of practice in which women might have a role without competition from men or other occupations, women's professions constructed their roles as decidedly feminine in character. It is not then surprising that when the time came to undertake a project to improve their status and rewards they would not be seen in the same light as other, male dominated, professions.

In examining the professionalizing behaviour of women's professions, Witz takes the work of Larson much further but the assumption that there is one way of achieving professional status that can be applied to both male and female dominated professions remains unchallenged. Witz demonstrates the existence of a professional project in nursing and midwifery but also notes their limited success. She argues that women have not been as successful as men in gaining full professional status because male dominated professions have been more powerful and able to demarcate and subordinate more effectively. Women therefore have had to seek market shelters in less well-paid areas of work with lower status.

Witz explores the attempts by nursing and midwifery to professionalize, noting that midwifery's success (if it can be called that) arose from medicine's attempts to demarcate women's roles in the birth process. Nursing's failure to 'fully' professionalize is attributed to internal nursing conflicts and the market for nursing services. In both cases the resources women brought to the task were considered to be inadequate in the face of the power of doctors and hospital

boards. Witz, in her research, demonstrates that women have engaged in professional projects. She shows that women's professions played by some of the same project rules as the traditional 'elite' male dominated professions by developing a course of study, a code of ethics and working towards professional registration. Yet they were unsuccessful. Witz found that the power differentials were key, as indeed they may be, but it is also possible that women's lack of success related not only to lack of skills, resources, efforts or negotiating power. Even if all of these had been in their favour the project might still have been unsuccessful, simply because they were women. The rules by which women's occupations or professions are expected to behave may be so different from men's that success through the professional project's established rules might not be achieved. If women's professions were viewed as extensions of women's roles in the home and subordinate to men's, engaging in an activity – a professional project which, hitherto, had been a prerogative of men, may have been viewed by both men and women as unacceptable. Put another way, professionalizing activities may be expected from men, but in undertaking professional projects, women are transgressing the boundaries of their gendered roles.

*Because they are women*

In the work of Hearn (although pre-dating Witz) we begin to see a much closer exploration of the relationship between professional status and gender as a characteristic of rather than a resource for profession and he, like Witz, seeks to locate professional status within wider gendered relationships (Hearn 1982; 1985; Hearn and Parkin 1995). He re-conceptualises full professionalism as patriarchal domination of areas of emotional life by men, arguing that full professional status

will only be achieved when men dominate both practitioner and managers' roles and, as women's professions remain only partially dominated by men, they are therefore 'semi' professions.

Hearn, like Witz a decade later, explores the relationship between professions and patriarchy. He contends that professionalization is a patriarchal process whereby

those areas of social life that were not directly under capitalist domination, yet which contributed to reproduction and were where emotions were especially likely to be unleashed, became clear targets for male domination through professions (Hearn 1982:188).

He further states that the

Professions are thereby seen to perform certain tasks formerly performed within the family. Typically these tasks involve the management of social conflict and tension, including illness (Ibid.: 189).

The status of the tasks increased as they transferred from the private to the public sphere as the 'development of the professions is also intimately bound up with the social organization and control of emotionality' (Ibid.: 190). Hearn asserts that the semi-professions – teaching, nursing and social work contribute to the 'progressive socialization of emotionality' and, as they professionalize are 'brought into public control by men' (Ibid.: 191). Patriarchal control is exercised through boards or organisations, subordination to men's professions or women acting on behalf of men. He, with Parkin (1995), later observes this as an organising feature of all work organizations not just those providing professional services. In the final stage of professionalizing, he suggests, women's professions adopt a masculine form of professional behaviour, which in turn makes the

profession more attractive to men leading to segmentation and eventual male domination and take over:

Full professionalization comes when the activity is fully dominated by men – in both the management and in the ranks. It is the fate that awaits the semi-professions (Ibid.: 195).

As Witz later points out, Hearn's professionalism is essentially patriarchalism where control by men over all aspects of emotional life is secured whether this is within the family or in the public sphere. Hearn's premise that professionalization is the process whereby men gain control over women's traditional roles, effectively excludes lawyers, architects and others from the definition of profession and leaves primarily medicine, the church and perhaps some aspects of family law as full professions.

Witz considers Hearn's analysis to be limited because

it precludes by definitional fiat alone the possibility of women engaging in professional projects because these become, by definition, male projects' (Witz 1992: 62).

Witz own research plainly shows women engaging in professional project activities but, as I noted above, without much success and, if Hearn's premise, that only professions dominated by men will be full professions is closer to reality, then the project is, effectively, a male if not patriarchal project. By definition a professional project is a project that achieves professional status. Without achieving professional status the component parts of the profession's activities in their attempts to professionalize are just that, components. It is only

when the aims are realised that it can be said to be a professional project. If there are no examples of women's professions successfully professionalizing to full professional status, then the project remains a men's occupational project. It is because women's attempts to professionalize have been so unsuccessful (none seem to be considered more than 'semi' professions which suggests they are only half way there) that we need to look more closely at the relationship between professional projects and gender. Again, raising the question of gender as a resource or a trait, or both, in the professionalizing process.

Although Hearn's theories offer only a partial explanation for the status of semi-professions his work takes us forward in the recognition that the status of a profession may be highly dependent on the status of its members with gender being a significant characteristic in the construction of professional status hierarchies. Also, whilst, along with Witz, I have reservations about Hearn's analysis of the professional project as a patriarchal project, I am more cautious about dismissing it absolutely, particularly in relation to the public sector. Since the development of the welfare state we have seen increasing levels of state intervention in people's lives and particularly domestic and emotional life. Alongside this there has been a professionalization of services and a shift towards bringing previously private areas of life into the public view. For example, the provision of childcare or care of older people has moved from the domestic sphere into nurseries and day centres with a commensurate increase in governmental patriarchal control over personal and emotional life. In a similar way, the government's attempts to 'professionalize', as in having formal systems to recruit select, manage and sustain, volunteer effort, are drawing areas of

personal and emotional life into the public sphere with increased patriarchal controls. Professionalism and patriarchy cannot be totally disentangled and in the public sector where women predominate but men dominate the interrelationships are very evident.

Hearn's analysis also offers a new line of enquiry. As others have done before him, he focuses on the project as the means of gaining professional status and is therefore dismissive of trait theory. At the same time, however, he notes that women's occupations have less status than men's because it is women who are primarily occupied in them i.e. gender as a trait of professional status. Men have gained control of most professions. It is only professions that are most associated with women's family roles that men do not dominate numerically and it is the professions that women dominate numerically that have lower status. Hearn suggests that without male domination, the professional project is unachievable. This opens up the possibility that, regardless of the merits of the case for professionalization or the project management skills of those undertaking the project, without the trait of masculinity (in fact as well as in image), the occupation will not be successful in professionalizing. Hearn's work remains largely theoretical in that there are few studies of professions (or occupations) that have crossed genders to explore if professional status increases or diminishes according the gender composition of the work force. Witz' study of radiographers (1992) might have offered an opportunity for this but the spotlight was on men's resistance to enabling women to join the profession rather than an examination of the status of the profession as its gender changed.



## **Deprofessionalization**

If professionalization is possible so too is deprofessionalization. The protection of knowledge and jurisdictional boundaries from the incursion of other professions and occupations, managers and even lay people is a continuous one. The demise of the professions has been frequently forecast in the past through the proletarianization of the professions (Derber 1982; McKinlay and Arches 1985), the routineization or bureaucratization of knowledge (Toren 1975; Berg 1997), the growth of managerial control (McKinlay and Arches 1985; Harrison and Ahmed 2000; Wrigley and McKevitt 1994) and the blurring of occupational boundaries through the development of 'multi- skilled teams' in which specific craft or professional skills are no longer carried from one organisations to another (Casey 1995). In spite of all these threats, the professions have shown themselves to be markedly resilient. Whilst some of their freedoms have been curtailed as the majority now operate in private or public sector corporations rather than as individual practitioners and may be accountable to those corporations rather than individual clients, independence and freedom seem to be less highly valued than perhaps they once were (Freidson 1977; Horobin 1983). Corporate responsibility offers protection from the risks faced by sole practitioners and independence from the client has been replaced with a partnership approach where the mark of a professional now implies their ability to work with client's own identified interests (Bertilsson 1990).

The knowledge base of professionals remains difficult to transfer as most learning takes place both in a university setting and during practice thus making it difficult for lay people to acquire both the knowledge and the skills simultaneously.



Attempts made to demystify a professional activity through the publication of textbooks, internet advice or advice centres inevitably results in professional activity being directed at new, as yet uncharted, professional territories and mystifying new areas of practice. Occupational claims to the status of a profession may be contested by other professions, would be professions, the client group, the state or the public. But, in spite of all the threats to professions they remain in high demand.

In the public sector, whilst the state needs the professions and therefore grants them certain rights and a degree of autonomy, any independence beyond that which is deemed necessary to do the job the state requires of them will be resisted

But the welfare state to a very considerable extent depends on the professional judgements which it, paradoxically, seeks to control politically (Bertilsson 1990: 115).

Thus making for an uneasy relationship between the state and the professions and any efforts to 'roll back the frontiers of the state' therefore directly impact on professions. As professions continually seek to extend the scope of their activities and extend the market for their services there is constant tension between those who provide the services and those who fund them. Many public sector services are low tech (except medicine and nursing), highly personal services and so pressure will always be on suppressing wages as the greatest area of expenditure. Additionally as the range of tasks professionals undertake increases, the government will seek to limit these as much as it can, pay only for those tasks it wishes to be undertaken and to ensure that the cheapest options for delivery are employed.

In the UK the 1979 Conservative government heralded a new approach to public services. It was worried that the public sector had grown inexorably in the post war years and that providers rather than consumers were determining service provision. The government was keen to reduce the public sector and curtail its freedoms. Public services were perceived by both the left and the right to be unresponsive to the needs of service users, the government and the public as tax payers, controlled by inefficient 'bureaucrats' who were motivated more by self interest than the public good and able to resist change because of their monopoly position (McCarthy 1989; Loney et al 1991).

For the right, the customer suffers from the exercise of monopoly power; for the left, professional mystification is a source of systematic disempowerment for clients, particularly of state bureaucracies (Aldridge 1996: 178).

Public sector organisations were seen to be expanding and resource hungry without proven effectiveness and maladaptive to the new demands placed on them (Metcalf and Richards 1990).

That the professions were under attack towards the end of the twentieth century seems not to be in dispute, particularly in the public sector and the new managerialist and consumerist approach to public services has been cited as major contributor to this threat (Wrigley and McKevitt 1994; Bertilsson 1990; Reed and Anthony 1992; Flynn 1999; Freidson 2001). Freidson goes as far as defining professionalism as representing 'occupational rather than consumer or managerial control' (Freidson 2001: 180). Yet, although managerialist and consumerist approaches were initially perceived to be threats they have been since

incorporated into the professionalizing enterprise and in particular, the consumer dimension has been as much a resource for professions as a threat.

it seems possible to advance a rational theory of professional power based on 'justifiable reasons' and on seeking to call out the personhood (that is, agency) in the clients/citizens .....the promise of a modern, enlightened, professional culture lies in its discursive and justificatory practice bases of power (Bertilsson 1990: 130-131).

Fournier also maintains that the threats to the professions are exaggerated and that new ways of conceptualising the market for their services, whilst closing down some methods of working, opens up opportunities for new ones. She states that the 'logic of the market shifts rather than eliminates boundaries' and that 'knowledge is malleable and constitutive of, rather than bound by its 'field'. (Fournier 2000: 81). In other words if professions incorporate market ideology into their knowledge base then they can reconstitute the field in which they work. The growth of consumer and entrepreneurial dimensions in the activities of professionals is an example of this and professionals can 'claim broader, newer expertise which map onto concerns of enterprise and the market' (Ibid.: 83). Just as other threats to the professions have frequently been found to be false alarms, so too would the recent marketization changes appear to be.

Whilst marketization and managerialism may have created new opportunities for professionals rather than leading to the demise of the professions as originally feared, the gains have been unequal and gendered:

The unshackling of bureaucratic constraints has at last allowed public sector managers to become 'real men', released from the second class status of public functionaries by their exposure to the 'real world' of the market place (Clarke and Newman 1997: 70).

Medical practitioners, for example, have used the new management opportunities to arrogate organisational power alongside pre-existing professional power and thereby further subordinate other professions such as nursing and other 'professions allied to medicine' (Brown and McCartney 1999; Coyle 1995; Tinsley and Luck 1998). Meanwhile nurses and others have found

This erosion of the professional structure has removed senior posts previously occupied by women, degraded the therapy profession and placed them under the management of managers who do not have their clinical background or professional interests (Coyle 1995: 37).

As the number of professionals have risen, particularly in the public sector, and as the public sector has become a devalued occupational sphere, women have come to dominate public sector professions (Rubery and Fagan 1994; Coyle 1995). Yet, even when they dominate, they do not necessarily have the same status and rewards as their male predecessors. There has been a recent trend of women's professions, such as social work and teaching being incorporated into 'strategic' directorates such as 'community services' or 'lifelong learning and employment'. In these new directorates the most senior members are not necessarily from teaching or social work. As women have come closer to reaching the top of their profession, so the most senior roles in local authorities have moved to these new directorates with men holding the most senior positions (Perrott 2002). It is the

gendered nature of these shifts which is key and who are the winners and who are the losers in this changing environment.

Although all the indications suggest that the professions have been very successful in adapting and changing as the government's and the public's expectations change, this is rarely analysed through a gendered lens. Where research has been undertaken on professions in decline, it has tended to concentrate on *whether* a profession is being de-professionalized and in so doing questioning whether an occupation's grasp on professional status was anything other than very tenuous (Shaw, 1987; Abbott and Wallace 1990; Sibeon 1990; May and Annison 1998). In all these cases the professions in question – teaching, nursing, social work and probation are dominated by women but this is not explored as a possible reason for the decline nor is the underlying assumption that they were only ever 'semi' professions critically examined.

### **Summary and conclusions**

This chapter began by considering trait theory. It noted that traits serve a useful purpose for the lay public, the government and the professions although there is an absence of recent research on those characteristics that 'add up' to profession. Whilst acknowledging the limitations of trait theory, this chapter reasons that to examine characteristics is not necessarily to endorse them and by revealing those characteristics that professions themselves valorise, a liberating rather than a discriminatory enterprise is possible. The literature unmistakably shows that the elite professions are male dominated and semi-professions female dominated. Yet, the literature in the past fifty years has fixed only on those features said to be

intrinsic to the occupational task or the behaviour of the various actors. Only rarely has it explored the extent to which masculinity is constructed either as a trait or precondition for professional status or as a milestone to be achieved in the professionalizing process. To focus on the processes which have led to the acquisition of professional status without exploring the gendered characteristics of occupations that are successful or unsuccessful, results in an incomplete analysis of professionalism.

In spite of all the criticisms of trait theory by academics, a derivative version appears to dominate much of the literature, purportedly in an attempt to explain status differences between professions or branches of professions. The less valued characteristics are those that belong to female dominated professions. They are assumed to be intrinsic to the job without a critical exploration of the relationship between the characteristics, their value, gender and status. Neither trait nor project theories adequately explain occupational status differentials although some proponents of project theory note the extent to which men's professionalizing activities have effectively excluded women. It has taken until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for women to gain entry into the elite professions in any significant number. Exclusionary theories provide an understanding of gendered occupational status differentials and women, even in those professions that have opened up to them, still have unequal representation in the elite branches or tend to be clustered in their less prestigious sectors.

This chapter has discussed the early days of women's professionalizing projects and how women created particular employment niches relating to their traditional

roles within the home and family. In creating a space in which to work, women have constructed the services as feminine and attempts to professionalize have not resulted in improved status. The transition from vocation to profession (or in more modern day terms voluntary to professional) may also leave women's occupations open to countervailing projects.

Both project and exclusion theories imply that as women gain greater access to the elite professions, this will have no impact on the status of the occupation. An exception to this is Hearn who asserts professionalization is a patriarchal and masculinization project. The problematic nature of his theories across all professional and occupational domains is referred to in this chapter, whilst acknowledging it as a helpful, if partial, explanation for men's professions' enhanced social status. Hearn's work, however, is not empirically based and research on the status of occupations as their gender composition changes remains a gap.

This chapter ended by considering the extent to which there is evidence of deprofessionalization and the gendered nature of loss of status. Whilst the changing environment in which professions operate may initially appear to be one that places professional practice and status at risk, a number of professions have been able to turn this to their advantage, incorporating management and consumer ideologies into their construction of profession. However, the impact of consumerism and managerialism has not been uniform and, whilst male dominated professions have, apparently, benefited from these developments, they have impacted badly on women's professions.



The threat of deprofessionalization may be overblown and there are no indications that the public or the government relies any less on professional services than hitherto. However, the fortunes of professions have varied over time as has the esteem in which they are held. Some professions have reduced in status and professions in the public sector have been more vulnerable than most. Some questions remain to be answered. What are the characteristics of professions in decline and do those characteristics precipitate decline? In other words do occupations decline in status as the characteristics of their membership changes or is the decline only related to the external environment and the market for services, which may, in turn impact upon the characteristics of those applying to be members? Are some groups better able to persuade the government and the public of their continuing need in the maintenance of social order because the occupation's members have a high social status or does it relate purely to their skills of persuasion? Are some professional groups more likely to be persuasive because of their positions on the social and economic status hierarchies? These are key questions to be answered in the journey to understanding the relationship between profession and gender.



## CHAPTER 3: The rise and fall of the probation profession

Historical accounts of crime and punishment all indicate the primacy of death, torture, deportation or banishment and, latterly, imprisonment as means of dealing with law breakers (Foucault 1977; Pettifer 1992; Morris and Rothman 1995). Given the long history of punishments designed to eliminate the offender from society it is perhaps not surprising that community sanctions are a fairly new introduction to the punishment repertoire. That probation, up until the 1991 Criminal Justice Act was, in law, an *alternative* to a punishment (and still is in Scotland) is probably a reflection of penological thinking at the turn of the century, when it was difficult to conceive of punishment as being anything other than that which was physically painful and incapacitating.

In this chapter I consider the development of probation as a profession through a gendered lens. I firstly trace the early days of probation as a vocation and its rise to professional status during the 1960s with its subsequent decline from the end of the 1970s (Table 1- a summary of key dates, can be found at the end of the chapter). The chapter explores the changing status of the profession as the numbers of women increased and the government's determination to change the type of person appointed in the 1990s. This chapter reveals how, over the century of its existence, the status of probation has been closely linked to the gender (and class) of its members.

### **Probation as vocation**

The first Police Court Missionaries, who were the forerunners of probation officers, were appointed in 1876. They were appointed by the Church of England Temperance Society (CETS) to work with offenders and divert them from crime. The first two missionaries were ex-guards officers, thus beginning the long history of probation as a suitable career for those leaving the armed services, and it was not until 1884 that the first female 'mission woman' was appointed (Walton 1975). The courts had the power to release offenders 'on probation' and many received help from the Police Court Missionaries and Women Missionaries but, prior to the implementation of the 1907 Probation of Offenders Act, offenders could not be statutorily released from the courts without punishment. Following the Act they could be discharged subject to good behaviour and with a probation officer to 'advise assist and befriend' them. The earliest probation officers, after the Act was implemented, were appointed from the ranks of the Police Court Missionaries but over time probation officers from other religious organisations (Catholic and Jewish) were also appointed.

By 1910 there were 100 male probation officers and 9 female officers (Walton 1975), and the key qualification for practice was a religious vocation with temperance. They were often poorly educated and working class leading one commentator to lament in 1907:

Perhaps, if the missionary had been a man of culture and social standing, he would have risen unharmed above the difficulties that beset his position. The magistrates would have extended to him a more cordial welcome and freer companionship, and the police would have been

obliged to recognise him as a superior. But the missionary is, at his best, a self-educated man with no pretension to a high rank in the social scale. Temperance is the primary objective of his society. (Gammon in Page 1992: 50).

Probation officers could not consider themselves to be on the same rung of the social ladder as the magistrates who were from the property owning classes whilst they could consider themselves socially superior to the police. Up until the development of the Home Office training scheme in 1930, probation officers' training was either non-existent or minimal and, in the case of missionary officers, related as much to their religious duties as to their secular ones. Even after the introduction of training, it was neither compulsory nor widespread with a number of probation officers remaining untrained both prior and subsequent to appointment (Bochel 1976; Page 1992). In the early days of the occupation male probation officers were often drawn from the less well-educated sections of the community whilst their female counterparts tended to be better-educated middle class women, often of independent means (Page 1992). Those that worked with children often had former experience in childcare or teaching, both being well regarded occupations (paid or unpaid) for women. Well educated middle class women who wanted or had to work had no option but to enter occupations or professions that, were they men, would have been considered to be below their status, for example, nursing, teaching and also the police and prison services.

Although the appointment of police court missionaries to the post of probation officers ceased after 1934, the influence of the early missionaries continued for many years. Histories of probation mention missionary probation officers

employed as singleton officers in some Petty Sessional Divisions (PSDs) for over quarter of a century and those same officers would have trained their successors (Page 1992; Ryder 1995). Glover (1949), in her training textbook, gave significant emphasis to the importance of Christian beliefs in undertaking the probation task. So, as the occupation began to professionalise there was a considerable number of residual probation officers who were resistant to the changes and the secularisation of social work and missionary work with offenders. Even when I joined the service in the late 1970s probation was still viewed as a vocation and many of the probation officers with whom I worked had strong Christian beliefs which both influenced their choice of career and also their approach to practice.

Both the Association of Children's Probation Officers and, increasingly, the government and the courts considered the police court missionaries, without specialist training, to be unsuited to work with juveniles (Home Office 1922, Page 1992). At this time the London children's probation officers were predominantly women and they worked in a specialist and highly regarded social work role. They had the ear of the Home Office as London probation officers were directly accountable to it (rather than local committees). Anxiety about the quality of, mainly male, police court missionaries may have prompted their attempts to professionalize (as in improving standards). However, it is also possible that they wanted to create a niche for themselves within the wider probation profession as children's probation officers, much in the same way that other women's professions have done in the past in order to clear a space in which to work. In other words, to set children's probation officers up as a separate profession.

Although the contrast between the education and training of the male and female probation officers was very evident, there was a reluctance on the part of male officers to consider their skills deficient in any way and the trend towards professionalization was fiercely resisted (Page 1992). This reluctance has been a feature of both social work and probation for most of the twentieth century leading Younghusband to note in exasperation:

There is a deplorable tendency to think that, though a woman social worker needs training, a man has acquired all he needs to know through some all sufficing experience of life which is a substitute for and not an enhancement of training (Younghusband 1968: 5).

(A not dissimilar assumption lay behind the government's decision in 1995 to withdraw probation training from higher education). Men's resistance to professionalization (training) is also similar to that of other male dominated occupations which relied on the authority of their role rather than learning for their social status.

### **Becoming a profession**

In their role as police court missionaries, probation officers attributed offending to the absence of a godly life but as the influence of the sciences grew and 'rational' explanations were sought for social problems, simple notions of good and evil were eschewed for more positivist understandings. Social and psychological explanations were developed and offenders began to be categorised as (for example) "young" or "habitual"; "necessitous" or "incorrigible" and therefore requiring either help or punishment. In order to determine which offenders would benefit from probation, enquiries were needed into their social circumstances and

their likely motivation to refrain from further offending should the court place them on probation. Probation officers therefore became involved in the preparation of Social Enquiry Reports and these became a statutory responsibility in 1948. These were later to become Pre-Sentence Reports. In order to assess offenders and distinguish between those who could be helped and those who could not, probation officers sought knowledge on the causes of offending and its prevention, meeting together to discuss cases and to hear from psychiatrists and psychologists about new ways of working with offenders, marking the beginnings of a professional association.

As the work of the probation officer developed, the range of the probation officers' tasks extended to all aspects of the courts business and beyond to include assessments for affiliation orders in the case of absent fathers and 'kindred' social work, a catchall category of social and welfare advice.

- (1) Applications for summonses under the Married Women's Act.
- (2) Parents who want advice because their children are out of control.
- (3) Unmarried mothers wishing to know whether they have sufficient evidence to apply for an affiliation order.
- (4) Persons requesting advice about adoption.
- (5) Destitute persons seeking help.
- (6) Youths or girls who have drifted into the town in search of work, and who are sometimes referred to the probation officer by the police.
- (7) Discharged prisoners, or ex-inmates of various institutions.
- (8) Friends or relatives of attempted suicides (LeMesurier 1935: 58).

Given the difficulties associated with separation or divorce a number of women would also be unable to persuade a court of their case for financial assistance from the state or ex-husband/partners without prior intervention and assessment by a probation officer.

Prior to the development of social work departments, the arrangements for social work provision were spread amongst a number of statutory organisations and religious or charitable bodies. The combined range of tasks outlined above as 'social workers of the court' and the young age of many of the service's clients identified probation officers unambiguously as engaged in social work.

As the developing disciplines of sociology and psychology began to influence government policy, medical and social work communities re-conceptualised crime as a symptom of a problem rather than a problem itself, particularly in respect of children.

Delinquency has now entered the field of medical, educational and social activity, and in one aspect has become a part of the general problem of Mental Hygiene (LeMesurier, 1935: 208).

After the Second World War (1939-45) during which the number of young offenders increased substantially, probation became part of the developing 'welfare state' where the treatment ideal flourished. Addressing personal and social functioning through 'talking therapies' to achieve change in the individual and a better adjustment to society became the priority for those who worked with offenders. Growing numbers of social workers were needed to assess and treat offenders using the new casework approach and by the mid 1960s 'social



casework' was the dominant method of probation intervention (Hollis 1964; Monger 1964). This led the Morison Committee to conclude, at the end of its three-year review of the probation system in 1962, that probation was fully established as a profession as a result of its expertise in this particular method of work (Home Office 1962).

Probation's status as a profession appears to have remained unchallenged for many years but, following the removal of training from higher education in the 1990s, commentators began to suggest that probation had never really moved beyond being a semi or 'almost' profession. Its failure to reach full professional status was then attributed to its relationship with the courts as a 'servant' (Nellis 1998); its lack of autonomy from the government (May and Annison 1998) and its lack of success in pressing home the advantages gained post-Morison (Aldridge 1999).

Whether or not probation was fully established as a profession, by the end of the 1960s it had certainly acquired the pre-conditions of profession. There was an established area of cognitive expertise, training was available to all staff either before or after appointment and there was political support for addressing psychological and social problems through therapeutic techniques. The 1969 Children and Young Person's Act, in which greater powers to determine the needs of and placements for offending and troubled children were given to social services departments, is an indicator of the dominance of the therapeutic ideal at that time. It reflects the government's belief that social work agencies could make a significant contribution to society's problems, including crime.



The optimism of the period is very evident in a series of films created for television in the early 1960s under the title "The Probation Officer". These were dramatisations of the probation officer's role but are nonetheless revealing about probation at the time. In the films male officers dominated by a ratio of 2:1 and the women officers had small parts in supporting roles (often a listening role when the male officers came back from particularly difficult interviews). The officers were presented as men of integrity. They confronted delinquents with their bad behaviour and sometimes suggested they were sent to approved school or borstal. They also told some unwelcome truths to (middle class) parents about their children's attitudes and need for discipline but defended vigorously in court those offenders who they thought could be turned around from offending. They were generally on the side of those that were remorseful and wanted to change their ways and, in 'giving chances' to even the most recalcitrant offenders, were able to lead them to a better way of life. They presented as having real authority with offenders, families, the courts and other professionals. They wore suits in court and sports jackets when meeting with offenders and they had upper class accents.

Over the years the probation service reduced its involvement with women offenders. The incidence of female drunkenness sharply declined during the course of the century and different approaches to dealing with prostitution such as The Street Offences Act 1959, meant there were fewer women to supervise. In the 1960s and 1970s the Probation Service took on new responsibilities such as parole in 1960, life licences in 1967, Community Service in 1972, Suspended Sentence Supervision Orders 1972 and bail hostels in 1973. These new

developments individually and cumulatively shifted probation attention from first and less serious offenders and juveniles to more serious offenders, who were older and more entrenched in their offending. The requirements of the new disposals were also more stringent and the authority role of the probation officer more explicit. Social casework was no longer considered appropriate for all cases and oversight and supervision became more pronounced.

Whilst probation officers were ambivalent about the new responsibilities fearing that the overt exercise of authority undermined their professional, therapeutic skills, the mid 1960s to late 1970s was a 'golden' period for the probation profession, both in terms of the government's confidence in probation as the right agency for the new sentences and in terms of its growing economic and social rewards. Salaries rose and social work was thought by the government to offer a real promise of social change. During the 1960s and 1970s when probation officers enjoyed some prestige and political support, they began to accrue some of the status 'trappings' of profession. Probation officers acquired their own rooms and their own (female) secretaries who took shorthand dictation and made tea for 'their' officers. They had their own caseloads and clients remained with them for as long as they had contact with the service. Records were the individual officer's rather than the agency's and probation officers were free to conduct their work with the offender in any way they chose. Having qualified as a probation officer and completed a 'confirmation' year, examined by Home Office Inspectors (up until 1975) who were recruited from the ranks of the most senior probation officers, they were 'licensed to practice' until their retirement. When, following the Seeborn Report in 1970, local social work departments were established,

probation fought to keep its independence and maintain its distinct purpose and identity. In Scotland, probation officers were incorporated into the new social work departments as a 'criminal justice service'. For many years, and until the government took on the direct funding of criminal justice services in the early 1990s, social workers working in this area were a marginal part of the social work workforce.

Probation's professional status, like most other professions', peaked in the 1970s before a more critical appraisal of professions' worth took hold. By then probation and social work, now dominated by some of the very social scientists who had been in the forefront of demolishing professional claims, were avowedly anti-profession (Bailey and Brake 1975; Pearson 1975; Corrigan and Leonard 1978; Bailey and Brake 1980; Langan and Lee 1989; Walker and Beaumont 1981). It is during the 1970s that radical social work, in which social workers worked with communities and individuals as 'equals', gained ascendancy. As Case Con (the radical social work network and magazine of the same name active in the early 1970s) noted in its manifesto:

'Professionalism' ... isolates the social worker from the population at large...it encourages the introduction of businesslike career structures, where 'correct' and 'professional' behaviour (such as 'detachment' and 'controlled emotional involvement') is rewarded with advancement...One important tool of professional social work has been casework...Social work has now expanded to include new (and not so new) tricks, such as community work, group work, welfare rights work, etc., which, when professionalized, end up by becoming the same sort of mechanism of

control as traditional casework...Professionalism is a particularly dangerous development It must be fought at every opportunity (Case Con manifesto - undated (early 1970s).

Whilst not everyone in probation shared this view and some members of probation were deeply conservative, a number of people who were later to be involved in the probation's reprofessionalizing project had both been members of Case Con and National Members Action Group (NMAG), a well-supported left wing group in NAPO. Furthermore, whilst the anti-profession stance might not have been common to everybody in probation, their educational background ensured they were very aware of the arguments and the support it commanded.

NAPO represented all probation officer grades and 99% of the profession and ACOP did not yet exist. NAPO strongly opposed increasing the length of professional training as being 'elitist and 'exclusionary'. During this period it also pursued other policies that appeared to be antithetical to the advancement of the profession. For example, rather than seeking to extend professional jurisdiction and demand for services, NAPO argued that probation officers should no longer work in prisons and prison staff should be trained to undertake their jobs. This policy was actively pursued until it became clear that Home Office might well go further than this and remove many other tasks from probation (Home Office 1990a; 1990b). Similarly the policy of resisting an extension of the length of probation training was retained until the policy, and the reasoning behind it, could be appropriated by the government for its deprofessionalizing agenda. As probation's future looked increasingly insecure, it became more conservative and protectionist over its training and field of practice.

## **Probation's relations with the government**

The Home Office was not very much involved in the probation system until 1922 with the development of a Probation Advisory Board which issued advice on probation matters and established the Home Office training scheme for probation officers in 1930. 50% funding was introduced in 1925 but it was not until 1948 that the Home Secretary was given statutory responsibility for the probation service<sup>2</sup>. The Probation Inspectorate was formed in 1936 and had largely advisory and supportive functions up until the 1991 Criminal Justice Act when it was placed on a statutory footing reporting directly to the Home Secretary and being accountable to him (so far) on matters relating to probation.

### *Government controls and managerialism*

In 1962 the Morison committee noted that there were 62 principal probation officer and 158 senior probation officer posts in a service of 1,800 probation officers, just over 12% of staff being involved in supervision or administration. Almost all senior probation officers carried caseloads and so did many of the principals, especially those in the smaller areas. Not only did more senior staff expect to supervise offenders as the scope and scale of their administrative duties warranted it, but continuing to practice was also viewed by them as part of being a 'professional'.

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<sup>2</sup> By this time local committees had been established and there were strong links between probation officers and 'their' court. This local control remained a feature of the probation service for many years and explains the powerful position the probation committees have held in determining probation policies, to the extent that the committees have sometimes been seen by the government as much a barrier to change as the people they employ.

By 1974, the year in which Principal Probation Officers were renamed Chief Probation Officers, 20% of probation officer grades were at senior probation officer or above level and this percentage rose by only 1% over the following two decades although, during the 1980s and 1990s a number of other posts relating to management functions - information, finance, personnel etc. were also created (Home Office 1979; Home Office 1989; Home Office 1998). The significant rise in the number of managers in the service occurred in response to the rise in the number of offenders being supervised on parole (1960) or voluntary after care (1966). Whilst probation 'case' committees, made up of local magistrates had supervised the work of probation officers in respect of those cases placed on probation by the courts, there had been little need for internal service accountability. The introduction of after-care where the probation service, rather than case committees exercised delegated authority on behalf of the prison service for the supervision of post release cases led to increased oversight by senior probation officers for this function. Additionally, as the service rapidly expanded when it took on the through and after-care roles, it developed bureaucratic systems of organisation which in turn led to the development of management thinking within the service. Haxby noted that the expansion was

accompanied by the establishment of hierarchical structures and have led to tensions arising from the feeling that the independence and autonomy of the main-grade officer are being threatened (Haxby 1978: 29).

In 1972 the Butterworth Report (Department of Employment 1972) noted that the supervision of staff in the probation service was akin to the academic model of supervision and the role of service managers was to provide the means for

probation officers to perform their duties. Within the service there was no expectation that seniors would control staff, set direction or monitor staff's work. As professionals, probation officers were free to practice as they chose, having received advice and guidance from more experienced colleagues. The development of community service in 1972 which was largely undertaken by staff who were not professionally (social work) qualified, saw the development of different training and supervisory arrangements from those pertaining to probation officers. Staff employed as instructors or supervisors were employed on different codes and conditions of service and their working hours were specified and regulated. New systems, the means of accounting for time spent and different supervisory arrangements with clearer direction and oversight were introduced. The task of senior probation officers working in community service was more managerial than enabling. Many became responsible for budgets and had to take on the 'marketing' role of the new sentence. In addition the throughput of orders and compliance monitoring were deemed to be crucial tasks for the success of this new sentence. The learning of new skills in order to perform these overtly management roles were to influence the development of management within the service (Statham 1992).

In spite of the development of community service and other responsibilities, the real change from a professional to a managed service did not really take place until after the election of the Conservatives in 1979 and the introduction of New Public Management (Hood 1991). The 'administrative-professional' model (McWilliams 1992), whereby managers administered and organised services in order to facilitate professionally determined practice, was superseded by one that



was more overtly managerial. A review of the service's management arrangements in 1980 stated that the primary task of management was to 'identify the task which society requires of the service, and to develop ways of discharging those responsibilities more effectively' and the report recommended the adoption of a 'Management by Objectives' model as the most appropriate means of achieving this (Joint Negotiating Committee for the Probation Service 1980: 9). Like many other public sector organisations, probation was slow to change and did not readily adapt to the new demands made of it.

The Conservative government in 1979 introduced a more managerialist approach into public services although it was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s that many of the changes were introduced into criminal justice agencies, including the probation service. Measures introduced into the probation service included:

- ◆ A Statement of National Objectives and Standards for the Probation Service (SNOP) in 1984 which set objectives and priorities for the probation service for the first time. These were followed by local statements known colloquially as SLOPS; three-year strategic plans and annual reports.
- ◆ A national Inspectorate accountable directly to the Home Secretary for the quality and performance of probation and the introduction of local inspection arrangements in 1991.
- ◆ A Resource Management Information System (RMIS), deriving from the government's Financial Management Information System (FMIS), was introduced in 1992 which costed all areas of probation activity and cash limited budgets.



- ◆ Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were introduced in 1994 (almost a decade after their introduction into most other public services). National practice standards were introduced for Community Service in 1988 and probation in 1992.

Probation service managers were not reluctant to take on these new responsibilities devolved from the centre and as, in this new environment, better financial rewards and status accrued from being a 'manager' rather than a 'practitioner' there was some enthusiasm for the task or as one chief put it:

But reflecting the views of Harvey-Jones (1982) the *orchestration* will be in the hands of the chief. Therefore, the effectiveness of systems, the performance of subordinates, links with the outside world, advising the probation committee and leading the service are all part of leadership (Statham 1992: 80) (emphasis mine).

As professional autonomy declined - or was perceived as declining, and control over work and the work environment reduced, managers appeared to have greater autonomy and control, representing and speaking for probation at a local level where probation officers had previously done so (May 1991). As managers primarily came from the profession both sapiential and positional authority combined to give considerable power to managers and management. Becoming a manager therefore increased professional responsibility and control and became increasingly attractive compared to main grade work.

The drive to change probation from a professional culture, where the work was determined according to individual agreements between probation officers and

clients, to a managed service, where the priorities and objectives were determined from the centre, impacted on probation officers and their professional discretion. No longer were they able to practice as 'licensed practitioners' but they became representatives of the agency in their dealings with offenders, the courts and others. Managers ceased to speak of 'clients' but spoke of service 'users' or 'offenders'; files became agency rather than probation officer's files and a corporate approach to the management and supervision of offenders was introduced.

#### *A deteriorating relationship*

Although a more punitive approach to offenders had been in evidence since the 1979 General Election, the probation service and others within the criminal justice system were seen as central to solving the 'crime problem'. In the 1980s unlike other public sector organisations, probation budgets had yet to be cut and national standards and centrally determined performance indicators had yet to be devised. The government was comparatively supportive, in public at least, of the probation service and those who worked in it. Other occupations such as teaching and social work had come under considerably more government scrutiny and welfare services such as social security, housing and health had been reduced throughout the eighties. Whilst probation might not have liked the prevailing criminal justice, social or economic policies, and was fretful about the detrimental effect these were having on the lives of offenders, it seemed as though its own future was assured.

Throughout the 1980s there were expectations that more offenders could be supervised in the community. The government's 'twin track' approach whereby minor offenders would receive non-custodial sentences and serious offenders longer custodial sentences, was at the heart of the 1991 Criminal Justice Act. The Act however, came too late. The government was not able to persuade the judiciary of its merits. Judges expressed unease about their inability to take account previous offending and a few high profile cases of aberrations in fining quickly brought changes to the Act. The success of the Act, in its early stages, in reducing the prison population by 5,000 in less than a year may have also contributed to its downfall, confirming for some that the government had "gone soft on crime" (Baker 1996).

The change in government's thinking about the central role for probation occurred towards the end of 1992 as the Home Secretary, initially Kenneth Clark but then quickly followed by Michael Howard, began dismantling the more liberal provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. At the same time the decarceration aspirations of the Act were abandoned and the ideology of 'prison works' began to be espoused.

the government firmly believes that prison works. Firstly by taking offenders out of circulation it prevents them from committing yet more crime... Second, prison protects the public from dangerous criminals. Finally, time spent in prison can be used to rehabilitate offenders, for example by improving their training or education. (Home Office 1996: 4).

Any protection from close government scrutiny that the probation service might have enjoyed through out the 80s as a 'law and order' agency disappeared and it was subject to attack from the government on a number of fronts.

The government believed that community sentences, which could not place a total barrier between the offender and the opportunities to offend, were second best as sentences but needed for minor offenders in those cases where imprisonment was too costly to pursue. Community sentences were no longer seen as an alternative to custody but as a means of providing degrees of custody more cheaply in the community for those offenders who did not require totally secure conditions. There was nothing new in this approach, the introduction of parole and post release supervision had blurred the boundaries between community and prison sentences and the introduction of day centres and hostels had challenged the notions of community sentences being alternatives to custody. Haxby (1978), a probation 'insider' and academic, had even suggested that probation should capitalise on these trends carving out new niches in which to work. What was new was that community sentences were no longer envisaged as a means of reducing the prison population but as increasing the scope to punish more offenders more severely. The strategy of reducing the law and order budget without increasing crime and securing tough community punishments required a different approach to the distribution of funds. In the first 3 Year Plan for the probation service produced in 1992 for the years 1993-1995 a modest growth in expenditure was anticipated for the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (Home Office 1995). A year later these increases (not yet implemented)

were rescinded and for the first time in the history of the probation service, budgets were cut.

Thereafter, the probation budget was cut year on year (both in real and cash terms) until 1998 when there was a slight increase in expenditure. By 1997 the probation budget was £386m, some £30m (in cash terms) below the 1994 levels. Alongside this decrease in resources there had been an increase in the workload from a caseload of 165,900 at the end of 1994 to 195,000 at the end of 1996 with further increases expected for 1998/9 (Home Office 1997).

In this more punitive and financially constrained climate probation caseloads continued to grow and there was no shortage of offenders for probation officers to supervise. The more punitive sentencing climate might therefore not initially be perceived as a threat to probation officers or their jobs. However the new 'contract' with probation changed to accommodate the new thinking. Although, as articulated through the annual 'Three Year Plans' for the probation service, probation officers were still expected to reduce offending, the means by which this might be achieved were no longer to be determined by them. The government was determined to curtail professional autonomy through the introduction of national standards for probation supervision which outlined the contact rates for seeing offenders, the minimum content of supervision plans and the structure and approach to court reports (Home Office 1992). (The introduction of national standards for Community Service in 1988 was not viewed to be such an encroachment on professional autonomy as the supervision of offenders on community service was not undertaken by professionally qualified staff).

Moreover, in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, the requirement to seek a Pre-Sentence Report prior to sentencing was dispensed with, thereby reducing the opportunity for probation officers to influence the nature of supervision that might be put forward in respect of each offender.

The government was also becoming increasingly hostile towards the dominant social work values and professional ideologies, which addressed issues of discrimination:

Greater separation between probation training and social work training would also avoid the ideology and the "political correctness" that tended to be peddled in social work departments. There were some suggestions that social work skills were actually inappropriate to probation work as social work involved encouraging individual choice in a way unsuited to work with delinquency (Dews and Watts 1994: 22).

There were criticisms of Central Council for the Education and Training in Social Work's (CCETSW) 'crusade for social reform' and it was feared that this might lead to the recruitment of 'probation staff committed to a particular narrow point of view on the origins and acceptable remedies for criminal justice problems' (ibid.: 23).

The government considered social work practice to be inappropriate for work with offenders and the social work skills used by probation officers in their efforts to achieve change were no longer perceived as relevant or valued by policy makers. The 'right' sort of probation officer was not one who could persuade offenders to change or even persuade them to undertake programmes that might

eventually lead to change, nor was the right sort of probation officer the sort of probation officer who could use their knowledge of offending and its causes to determine the intervention to be applied. It did not take the skills, training or education of probation officers to exercise oversight and restrict liberty and it did not need social workers to undertake the supervisory task. So, whilst the number of orders might grow, thereby suggesting that community sentences were a necessary part of the sentencing range, it did not imply confidence in the methods of supervision or the staff undertaking the task. The challenge to the profession was not that they would lose their jobs, although this too had been threatened (Home Office 1990a), but that their methods of working had to change to become methods of work associated with other occupations such as custodial or surveillance occupations and other 'non-professional' jobs.

### *Concerns about training*

The earliest signs of the Conservative government's disquiet about probation training, after their election in 1979, came in 1981 when, following an internal Home Office review, the number of institutions allocated Home Office sponsorships was reduced. In 1985, concerned about the costs of sponsorships, the Home Office instigated a further internal review to consider methods of withdrawing from the sponsorship scheme. In the end no action was taken. By 1988 unease within government was growing about whether the CQSW was sufficiently matched to the needs of probation and it commissioned David Coleman (a friend of the, then, Home Secretary, John Patten) to review probation training. The review was commissioned to consider whether the courses sponsored by the government were appropriately distributed throughout the

country. Recommendations for rationalization were to be made based on the quality of teaching.

Courses were assessed on the extent to which they covered criminal justice issues and probation practice and other matters relating to their organisation. At the time of the review the expressed views of probation were broadly in line with the government's concerns; one service stated that it was

in the business of diversion from custody and reduction in re-offending; our clients are the community, the Courts, the taxpayer and the offenders.... targeting the work, effectiveness, the use of data, Pr/marketing (Coleman 1989: 13).

Another service had

recognised the primacy of the controlling function for some time and it was time that courses followed it...and ceased to represent criminals simply as victims of their environment (ibid.).

The general view within the profession at the time was that there were a lot of poor courses that insufficiently prepared probation officers for practice. However, the probation service and the profession recognised the place of social work within the curriculum and its work with offenders:

Whether controlling offending behaviour is acceptable clearly depends on whether it is done within social work methods centred upon personal relationships (Ibid.: 14).

In 1989 when the report was published, the sex of probation officers or new recruits was not noted. The enquiry report used data for 1988 and, had they



considered the issue, they would have found that women were 43% of the workforce (whole time equivalents) and rising (Home Office 1989). At the time the main issue for the probation service and the universities was to raise the number of black graduates and to provide ethnically sensitive teaching. Coleman supported this move but was uneasy about the 'consciousness raising' elements of the courses and expressed anxiety that such approaches might alienate other students. The overall emphasis of the report was the failure of some courses to meet the needs of probation services but the needs as expressed by those services were not questioned.

At the same time Martin Davies and Andrew Wright at the University of East Anglia, also commissioned by the Home Office, conducted a review of probation training which also concluded that the CQSW was insufficiently targeted on probation officers needs (Davies and Wright 1989). The probation officers interviewed (all new recruits) considered the Diploma in Social Work to be the most appropriate qualification but wished to see better teaching. 60% of respondents to the survey of newly qualified staff were women. Both Coleman and Davies reflected government, employers and practitioners concerns about the quality of training provided on CQSW courses, all seeking greater attention to criminal justice issues, including victim awareness, and skills training in behavioural methods of dealing with offending.

In 1990 the government published the Green Paper "Supervision and Punishment in the Community" in which they made their dissatisfaction with probation training very clear:

The present pre-qualifying training system pays insufficient attention to criminal justice issues, and places too much weight on general social work skills. Probation work requires social work skills, but the balance struck in the present system is wrong...Should probation officers be required by the Probation rules to hold a social work qualification? Can adequate training be provided within the structure of social work training for probation officers who are officers of the court working in a criminal justice agency? Should a free standing probation qualification be developed? (Home Office 1990b: 35).

The government's dissatisfaction with probation training seemed to be derived largely from the Davies and Wright research and, in suggesting that a new approach to training was required, the government's view was not at odds with the profession. At that point the government drew back from changing the qualification and this appears to be for reasons of cost, choosing instead to invest in more probation appropriate training within the Dip SW. By this stage the Probation Consultative Group within CCETSW had completed work on the paper "Improving Qualifying Training in Social Work for Intending Probation Officers" (CCETSW 1988) which was later to become part of the requirements for the probation option of the new DipSW. The profession and the Home Office welcomed the new probation option. Universities and local services invested considerable energy and time in the delivery of the programme. There were a number of joint university/probation service appointments and probation officers taught on a number of the courses and were involved in the academic community.

From 1989 onwards the Diploma in Social Work, which introduced 'areas of preferred practice', replaced the CQSW and the training of probation officers became more specialised, the first students graduating in 1993. Whilst there was some generic input, the emphasis of much of the teaching was on the skills and knowledge required for practice in the probation service. Under the new arrangements the probation stream was later to be described as the 'jewel in the crown' of social work training (Marsh and Triseliotis 1996), and the improvements the DipSW brought to probation training were highly valued (Buchanan and Millar 1996). Up until this point the concerns of the government, managers and the profession had been broadly similar and had been addressed, satisfactorily to the service and the profession, whilst meeting the requirements outlined by Coleman five years earlier. However, the government, by this time, was committed to changing the training in order to change the staff profile.

In 1994 the Home Office instituted a further review of probation training published a year later as the 'Dews Report' (Dews and Watts 1994) and following publication the government decided to both remove probation training from social work and remove the requirement to undertake a course of study prior to practice, in other words to revert the profession back to an occupation. It is the profession's attempts at reprofessionalization i.e. to once again secure training in higher education following the government's decision that is the topic of this thesis.

## **Women in probation**

### *The early years*

Vicinus (1985) traces the rise of social work, nursing and teaching as careers for women in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth. She suggests that the motivation for working with the poor derived from the religious and social beliefs about the 'immorality' of slum life. The work was 'socially emphasised duties, not rights, social service not political action' (Ibid.: 16). There was no expectation among women that their work would fundamentally alter the class structure but it would alleviate the worst problems arising from it. Motivation for the work included curiosity, religious commitment, idealism, boredom, desire for adventure, self-education and doing important work. Although, from the very beginning women were involved in the work of the police court mission they often worked without pay. Generally, it was the male missionaries who were responsible for cases 'assisted' by women, often their wives (Page 1992), in much the same way that clergymen's wives have, traditionally, assisted their husbands in parish business.

In spite of the early positive unpaid contribution women made to probation, in seeking greater status and rewards NAPO was to disparage their efforts:

The standards of voluntary philanthropic work, as it used to be called, have altered profoundly since the Victorian days of Ladies bountiful bestowing indiscriminate charity and eager enthusiasts going slumming in desultory fashion, but there is still room for improvement. (LeMesurier, 1934: 71).

Women missionaries and, subsequently, women probation officers worked with women, the majority of whom had been convicted of prostitution or drunkenness offences, and young boys and girls under the age of fourteen. The probation officer's role as a social worker and particularly as a 'social worker of the court' required considerable contact with women and girls either as direct clients or as part of a family group. The significant number of women appearing for alcohol and prostitution offences also meant that the offender client group was not as predominantly male as it was to become. Information given by police court missionary societies to the Departmental Committee in 1922 for its review of the Probation of Offenders Act 1907 indicted that in some categories, work with women and girls far outstripped that of men (Home Office 1922). In the interests of the women being supervised but also, and more importantly, in the interests of those undertaking supervision, the probation rules prohibited men from supervising women directly:

In the probation service, the problems of women and girls are very frequently concerned with problems of sexual development, promiscuity and illegitimacy, and fears of accusations of sexual assault. Moreover the interviews might not take place in a neutral office situation, but alone with the woman in her home (Walton 1975: 119).

Although women and girls formed a significant proportion of probation caseloads some probation committees, were reluctant to appoint any women probation officers. The expectation that women should be appointed as probation officers, specifically to work with women and children was enshrined in the Criminal Justice Act 1925 (which made the appointment of probation officers compulsory).

The extent to which women struggled to gain appointments as probation officers is manifested through the disquiet raised by successive Departmental Committees about the absence of women in probation in spite of the availability of suitable and able women to appoint. In 1930, so concerned was the Home Office with the failures of committees to appoint women that a reminder of the requirements of the Criminal Justice Act 1925 was sent to all justices. The Home Office Circular noted that 468 out of 1,028 courts had failed to appoint women probation officers surmising that women offenders

‘must either have been placed under the care of women who were not Probation Officers or (as is more usual) under the care of male Probation Officers’(HOC 31 July 1930).

In 1934 the Departmental Committee again expressed disquiet about the lack of women probation officers. Eventually, The Criminal Justice Act 1948 required probation committees to appoint women probation officers, the requirement being rescinded in 1966.

Women seeking support or assistance for matrimonial difficulties or affiliation orders might only have access to a male officer. Patriarchal assumptions about the role of men within the family dominated government and probation discourses, including a belief that the wife in matrimonial proceedings would be advantaged by having a male probation officer because of the authority of his gender:

the man can usually be better handled by a male officer...some women applicants believe they receive more authoritative opinions on their problems when they lay their troubles before a man (LeMesurier 1935: 143).

By 1954 however due to the shortage of male Probation officers, women were dealing with all the matrimonial cases in London (Page 1992).

The probation service was a reserved occupation during the Second World War and men over 30 years of age were not called up for military service; nonetheless a number chose to go. As with many other occupations, the numbers of woman increased during the war years and the first and only Deputy Principal Probation Officer was appointed in 1942 and was a woman. During the war there was a rise in juvenile crime and a rise in the number of young people supervised by the probation service. 'Care and Protection' Orders rose significantly as girls became involved with American GIs stationed in the UK and there was also an increase in the number of prostitution convictions leading to much more work traditionally undertaken by women officers. The absence of men and the rise in what was viewed as gender appropriate work led to the London Probation Service having 53 female officers compared to 46 male officers in 1944 with 2 female Assistant Principle Probation Officers and 7 out of 14 female Senior Probation Officers (Page 1992). An analysis of the (albeit limited) literature on probation does not indicate that the gender balance was perceived to be a problem and it was similar to a number of other occupations during wartime. London was not, however, representative of the rest of the country as it had separate juvenile and adult probation officers, the former associated with childcare, an area in which women already had a strong presence.

Even in the early 1960s there was an assumption that men had all the skills necessary to work with women, although it might be undesirable for them to do so



for their own protection. Although women were legally able to supervise men they rarely did so. In the literature the reasons why women should not work with men are not addressed but there was an assumption, as expressed in the quote earlier about men's authority, that women lacked the authority to work with men, especially offenders. At that time, it was also unusual for middle class 'refined' women to work with 'rough' working men and because of their lack of experience as 'men of the world', women might be assumed to lack the necessary skills in this area. The Morison Committee, when reporting in 1962 noted that there was insufficient work with women in some areas to justify the whole time appointment of a female officer and they did not question the assumption that women should not work with men (Home Office 1962). The report did note however, that women probation officers supervised fewer cases in the belief that women and girls had more intractable problems than their male counterparts and were therefore more difficult and time consuming to supervise. Following publication of the Morison Report, male and female officers moved towards equalising workloads and supervising broadly similar caseloads.

### *Professional women*

With the growing expertise in the area of child development and psychology, educated, middle class women developed careers as social workers and probation officers with children, the age of criminal responsibility then being eight years. In contrast to their male missionary colleagues, they were well educated, especially in the new discipline of child psychology. They were also single and worked extremely long hours, as did their male colleagues, but were less likely to be encumbered with any other duties relating to religious affiliation or other



employment as a church missionary. They were generally younger than their male colleagues and many were working in a chosen first career rather than on retirement from an alternative occupation.

Even though there were insufficient good quality male applicants for probation officer posts, appointing committees only appointed women to posts designated as women probation officer posts and thus, as the number of male offenders increased so too did the work of male officers. Meanwhile, in more rural areas, women clients might not have access to a female probation officer. Appointing committees, in preferring a poorer quality male recruit to a good female recruit, lowered their expectations regarding levels of education and training when appointing men. Research undertaken in the 1950s found that in one Northern town male vacancies rarely attracted qualified or experienced men whilst the female candidates tended to be graduates, qualified and in some cases experienced in spite of the lower salaries offered to women (equal pay was not introduced until after 1955). In the research, the probation committee laments

the shortage of candidates showing keen interest in probation work, who are willing to devote their own time to it if necessary, or who, in their words, regard it as a vocation rather than a job (Rodgers and Dixon 1960: 97),

meaning the shortage of *male* candidates.

Although the quality of female recruits has been high over the history of probation, the need to improve the quality of recruits was raised as a persistent problem by successive governments and NAPO, even after the development of

Home Office training in 1930. At no stage was it suggested that the employment of more women would resolve the problem or was it acknowledged that the satisfactory candidates, in terms of education, qualifications and experience, were female. Rather, attracting good quality men continued to be the government and employers' aim. In London, where the probation service was managed directly by the Home Office up until 1965, special measures were introduced to attract men. They were offered employment in an unqualified capacity for a year followed by paid training on secondment (Page 1992). Even then, retaining men who wanted to start a family was difficult with the high cost of living in the city.

The 1922, 1934 and 1962 Departmental Committees were all concerned about the quality of male recruits to the probation service and attributed this to poor pay and career structures. The Morison Committee recommended in 1962 that there should be:

a bold increase in salaries which will put the service on a different plane of attraction, and encourage, as can do no other measure, interest in the opportunities which the modern service offers for a professional career (Home Office 1962: 41).

Following publication of the report salaries were increased and encouragement was given to the development of a career structure. Haxby (1978) notes that in 1950 and in 1976 the ratio of men to women was approximately 1.9:1, whereas in 1968, post Morison, it was 2.75:1. Whilst the Committee recognised a degree of vocation in the probation task, this was assumed to be greater for women than men and the salaries and career structure were targeted at men.

It must moreover, be remembered, that the service requires a very much higher proportion of male entrants than do comparable branches of social work, and its shortage is primarily of men (Home Office 1962: 40).

Later, in 1978, Haxby notes the high calibre of women working in social services, particularly at director level and suggests that the recruitment problems of the probation service could be alleviated by the recruitment of women 'returners' rather than seeking to recruit more men (Haxby 1978), a measure that has not been used to date.

### *Probation, social work and gender*

The probation officer's role was constructed as a masculine one either replicating the patriarchal role within the family in terms of male authority over women and children or as a controller of antisocial men in a publicly authoritarian role. It was however a social work role and one that attracted men who wished to express caring aspects of their personality. The significant pay rises in the mid 1960s, coupled with the rising status of the profession led to the service being much more male dominated in the late sixties and early seventies than it had been since the war. It was not only probation that benefited from substantial salary increases at this time. The general optimism about social work led to an increase in salaries across the board and at the end of the 1960s and in the early 1970s social work was a very attractive career choice for graduates, with salaries comparable to those of 'blue chip' employers such as ICI.

As new sentences such as parole and community service were introduced in the 1960s and 1970s, the client group became dominated by men and as matrimonial

and kindred social work diminished and family work became less common, there were fewer women to work with and the role of the probation officer became more overtly authoritarian. It seems ironic therefore that the qualification for appointment as a probation officer was to become the Certificate for the Qualification in Social Work (CQSW) in 1971 and probation was to be established through this means as a social work profession.

Following the introduction of the CQSW, probation remained different from other social work occupations and the difference was gendered. Although the work was associated with female skills that could be learned in the home such as the control of children, it was executed in such a way as to be associated with the patriarchal role of men exercising authority over delinquents whose families (mothers) were unable or unwilling to do so. The client group was predominantly male. And probation officers worked with offenders rather than elderly people or families. Probation officers worked within a male dominated criminal justice system that was highly ritualised and formal. This required an appropriate 'demeanour' in order to function in a criminal justice world as 'an officer of the court'. Probation officers emulated the language and presentation of lawyers. They wore suits to court and mixed with other court players, enjoying their own 'space' in this very masculine and formal world. In contrast, social workers attending court with juvenile offenders or in care proceedings did not have their own place in the courtroom and were treated by court staff as family extensions accompanying the wayward child rather than as 'distanced' professionals. There was no expectation that probation work required skills that could be learned in the home rather than in paid employment and whilst common sense and life experience were

considered to be important attributes of the probation officer, it became the one social work profession that statutorily required training before appointment.

Walton, in 1975, identified the gendered roles that operated in social work. Male social workers tended to work with men or boys, were in authority or controlling roles and in management or administration whilst women tended to be involved with 'face to face work with people in need', in counselling or 'non-directive' roles and working with young boys or girls and women (Walton 1975: 260). Following publication of the Seeborn Report (DHSS 1968), unified local authority social work departments which incorporated children's departments, hospital almoners and those caring for the elderly were developed. There was a huge expansion of staff and managerial roles within social services and men were appointed to these roles in significant numbers. Up to and including the early years of the 1970s there were few probation or social work managers and the expression of masculine roles was primarily through direct work with men or boys in a controlling capacity.

### *Changing gender demography*

The numbers of women entering the probation profession did not start to rise significantly until the late 1970s. The equal pay and equal opportunities legislation in the 1970s coupled with the rising numbers of women entering university and becoming a critical mass of graduates, particularly in the social sciences, began to influence the numbers of women going into the profession. More women during the seventies expected to be able to enter male dominated professions and were able to do so. Probation was attractive to women who were

seeking professional and career opportunities and who had a high level of idealism (Csikai and Rozensky 1997) and although it was male dominated it was not a hostile profession, as far as professions go, to women.

Alongside the rise in the probation's popularity as a career choice for women, following the changes brought about by the Seebohm Report in 1970, generic social work in local authority social work departments became an attractive career option for men. Between 1971 and 1976 the numbers of local authority social workers doubled from 10,000 to 21,000 (Langan 1993). There were more opportunities to develop practice and take on management responsibilities in the new generic social work departments. A good career structure and improved pay attracted many men who might otherwise have become probation officers. A number of men moved across to social services in the 1970s to take advantage of the better career opportunities there. It was possible to become a senior social worker after two or three years practice at main grade level in contrast to probation where eight years was then the norm. The hierarchy in the local authority was much greater and so there was an identifiable route for career progression whilst the majority of senior probation officers were unlikely to progress much beyond that point without moving out of the profession. Prior to the Seebohm reforms the local authority heads of children's departments had been primarily women, as had the most senior hospital almoners. By 1976 only 9% of directors of social work were women (Davis and Brook 1985). Thus, as both probation and social services expanded, the numbers of women entering probation began to increase, mirroring other professions or occupations where women have occupied roles vacated by men (Rubery and Fagan 1994).

Although social work was an attractive occupation for men during the 1970s, thereafter salaries began to decline in comparative terms and as cuts in public expenditure bit during the 1980s, they declined further. During the 1980s there were also a number of enquiries into childcare practices within social work and social workers were criticised in the media and by the government from 1979 onwards. Social work, alongside other professions such as teaching began to lose their enhanced social status and became increasingly unattractive to many potential candidates. As generic social work became increasingly unattractive to men, they did not return to probation and the numbers of women in the profession continued to rise during the 1980s and 1990s. At the end of 1992 the numbers of women probation officers exceeded men for the first time at 52%. The number of women in management grades was almost totally eclipsed by men up until the 1990s but as more women entered the service, women began to be promoted in increasing (albeit small) numbers. In 1982 women were being appointed to Senior Probation Officer grades in the exact proportion to their numbers applying (Wells 1983), although at that point women appeared to be reluctant to apply and this was attributed in part to reluctance to join the 'macho' management culture that pervaded the probation service during the 1980s (Hayles 1988). Since then women have been appointed to management posts in increasing numbers and by 1998, 39% of women probation officers were employed in management grades compared to 23% in 1987, this increase coinciding with the profession's decline.

In this more fragmented, individualistic and fraught context, women are more likely to become managers in reaction to (i) a lowering of the status of a profession held in low esteem by the public; (ii) a diminution in the numbers of men seeking social work careers; (iii) dwindling resources and



public expenditure cuts; (iv) the holding back of rises in social workers' salaries; and (v) the impact of equal opportunities policies as women press agencies to honour them (Dominelli 1996: 157).

However, although the number of women appointed to management positions has increased, the number of male managers has changed very little and the growth in the number of female managers has come from the increase in the number of management posts during the 80's. The number of women appointed to chief officer posts has increased but it was not until the 1990s that those women appointed to Assistant Chief Probation Officer grades in the 1980s were to emerge as Chief Probation Officers in the 1990s. In 1989 there were six female Chief Probation Officers (out of 54) which more than doubled to thirteen in less than a decade. During the 1980s the professional associations also began to appoint women to key roles and both NAPO and ACOP elected female chairs and appointed female General Secretaries during this period<sup>3</sup>.

### **Probation and gender - the 1990s.**

The rise in the number of women probation officers and managers has impacted on how the profession is perceived by its members. In 1988 Michelle Hayles in W Yorkshire Probation Service undertook research on women and promotion. She concluded that women were frequently reluctant to apply for promotion because they did not like the 'macho' management prevalent in the service in the 1980s

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<sup>3</sup> (Following the period of the research), in 2001 the probation system changed and a national service was established led by a female director. The probation structure now has a national office with regional senior management posts. Local services still remain as do Chief Probation Officers but these posts are now considerably lower on the probation hierarchy than they were prior to the reorganisation.



and they felt that managerial work would conflict with their preferred style of inter-personal relationships (Hayles 1988). At that point men still outnumbered women in the main grade and men dominated all the management grades. By 1994 women had made in-roads into the management grades in significant numbers and dominated the main grade. Felicity Collier found that women were willing to apply for management posts but had experienced discrimination in their quest for seniority. There were also significant barriers to women achieving seniority in terms of balancing home and work lives (Collier 1994). More recently, Jill Annison found that women at all grades in the service often struggle to manage both work and home demands and that the experience of working in the probation service is different for men and women (Annison 1998).

Both Annison and Collier note the number of men in the service who feel that women have disproportionately gained from equal opportunities policies, sometimes at the expense of men and that the service is too 'politically correct' in its application of them. These studies indicate that men, particularly at the lower levels of the service feel that they no longer have the same opportunities for career advancement although this remains very important to them. Women feel that the struggles to combine work and home life are becoming increasingly difficult and that their career opportunities remain severely restricted as a result of their family responsibilities. This highlights the two different worlds of work men and women inhabit. Men defining work in relation to career opportunities and women in relation to meeting their dual roles at home and at work. The experience of work and work management is therefore different for both.

All three studies (Hayles, Collier and Annison) indicate that probation management is perceived to be masculine in its character - prescriptive, controlling and instrumental and government policies are considered to have been a significant influence the drift towards the more masculine end of the continuum of organisational behaviour. Managers and practitioners of both sexes had reservations about the increasingly 'hard' methods of operating, not only with offenders but in relation to managing staff. Yet in the research both managers and staff present as powerless to influence this.

#### *Deprofessionalization and gender*

In the discussions about the potential for deprofessionalization, theorists have assumed that

while history may overtake an erstwhile profession, the worst that can happen to an occupation whose skills are still in demand is that its domain will be eroded at the margins. The possibility that a profession could be deconstructed by frontal state assault has been given little consideration (Aldridge 1999:73).

There can be few occupations (I know of none other than probation) where the need for a professional qualification, as a pre-requisite to practice, has been statutorily removed and for this reason the case of probation is an interesting and unique one. It is probably the first example of state sponsored deprofessionalization. The deprofessionalization of probation came therefore as a surprise not just to probation officers but to those studying professions and Aldridge suggests that Michael Howard may have initiated this 'unwittingly' (Ibid.).

Probation is a 'state sponsored' profession (Johnson, 1972). Although some form of voluntary probation supervision existed before the 1907 Probation of Offenders Act, probation officers have always worked as public employees, paid for by the state and empowered only to work with clients identified by statute. Probation officers do not exist without a probation service to work in and there is no other market for their services. As such they are entirely dependant on government support and should their tasks be transferred to another occupation, their profession would cease immediately. This makes them very vulnerable, and with such absolute control available to the government, makes them a relatively easy target. Aldridge asks

Why was the probation service targeted so specifically and comprehensively while other groups were attacked indirectly or partially? And why was the attack on this occupation relentlessly pursued when other initiatives were successfully repulsed or allowed to lapse? (Aldridge 1999: 84).

She suggests that the dependence of the profession on the state; its small size and therefore ease of compulsion; lack of public knowledge about it and therefore little public support; and, the characteristics of the incumbent Home Secretary are all significant. She explores the strategy used by the National Association of Probation Officers in their attempts to persuade parliament and the government of their cause. She notes their limited success and the marked indifference shown by the media to the campaign.

Shaw suggests that the mass professions such as teaching and social work are preoccupied with the technical aspects of the job and do not necessarily adapt to the new and changing political demands, they ignore wider political issues and are

thus more vulnerable to attack, de-skilling or deprofessionalization (Shaw 1987). It is likely that the most vulnerable occupations are not policing the boundaries of their professional expertise as assiduously as strong professions, making forays across the boundary to capture areas of others' expertise or taking up defensive positions prior to an imminent attack. Probation was not however a mass profession, it consisted of about 4000 members at the time. Nonetheless it was female dominated and as such may have had to defend its boundaries more vigorously or may have been less aware of the need to do so until it was too late.

Whilst these factors may have played a part it does not explain the government's motivation for such an attack. The desire to deprofessionalize probation, up until the 1990s, was absent from government thinking. Nellis (1998) suggests that the probation profession's unwillingness to take on the tougher rhetoric and to resist some aspects of The Criminal Justice Act 1991, left it vulnerable to being perceived as intransigent and out of touch and more liberal and 'soft' than the government, and incoming Home Secretary Michael Howard could accept.

NAPO retrospectively attributed the government's stance to 'political dogma' (NAPO 2000). Eadie suggests that it was in order to pass the control of training back to employers and managers in the service (Eadie 2000) and Coleman maintained that the problem lay with Central Council for the Education and Training of Social Work (CCETSW).

...what makes CCETSW different is that it is a quango with attitude. It has acquired, and to some extent propels, the theoretical and ideological underpinnings of a new invented profession...they colour the fundamental

interpretation of the causes of social problems which social work is meant to address (Coleman 1995).

The government was evidently intent on reducing the power of the universities in the training of probation officers and also that of CCETSW with whom it had a poor relationship. However, it is arguable whether it had sufficient confidence in the probation managers or committees to deliver the sort of training it wanted for this to be its primary motivation. All the responses to the review indicated that both managers and employers were opposed to the government's proposals and much else of the government's agenda; they were hardly 'on side' with the government.

The profession too had views about why it came under such a sustained attack. In my discussions with those most closely involved with the defence of probation training the following views were offered:

For 25 years the Home Office thought they were shortchanged by CCETSW. CCETSW could not see that the Home Office were not getting what they wanted, [they were] not politically astute. CCETSW really wound the Home Office up and official's confidence ebbed away (ACOP).

There was a second group of professional purists who have a view that 'we know what is best for you': it gets right up the Home Office's nose (NAPO).

(Michael) Howard was absolutely shocked about the number of lesbians in the probation service' (NAPO). (the Dews Report made much of the numbers of single women.)

I can time the change to Jamie Bulger's death, that was the turning point, the language was about condemning more and understanding less (NAPO).

Michael Howard saw the university tail wagging the probation dog (ACOP).

The issues raised earlier - central controls, managerialism, tougher response to offenders, have all been presented as gender neutral in their construction and application and the increase of central controls and managerialism in all public sector organisations is assumed to be based on market ideology rather than gender ideology. It is not the place of this thesis to explore the gendered nature of these constructs or the reasons for their development in the public sector, however as the number of women have grown in the public sector so too have the centralising controls and the rise of managerialism (Wilding 1997; Perrott 2002).

In the profession's own explanation of the government's position, gender is not suggested as a major reason other than the reference to sexuality. Yet the associations between social work and gender were strong as were the associations between CCETSW and gender. The increasingly punitive climate following the murder of Jamie Bulger reflected discontent with caring for or about offenders. It

is evident that those in the profession working for the reinstatement of a higher education qualification were aware of a deep Home Office suspicion of the role of the universities and the profession's claims.

### **Summary and conclusions**

Accounts of probation indicate that its professional status increased significantly in the 1960s and 1970s. This was during a period when probation officers took on new responsibilities, pay increased and the proportion of male officers increased substantially from under two thirds to almost three-quarters of the profession. We do not know if more men joined because of the improved rewards, or the new responsibilities were attractive to them. Nor do we know if the increased status was as a result of the greater number of men in probation. Whatever, the reason, there appears to be clear associations between male dominance and improved status and rewards. The higher the status, the greater the proportion of men employed whilst its low status in recent years has occurred as the number of women have increased.

The history of probation does not suggest that it has spent much time on improving its professional status. Any improvements in training have been government led and sometimes in the face of occupational resistance as potentially exclusive of working class or black people (though not women). Yet, in spite of probation's seeming reluctance to professionalize, it seriously engaged in professionalizing activities during the 1990s as I shall go on to demonstrate. I noted in this chapter that the anti-profession stance adopted by probation and

some other occupations in the 1970s and 1980s appeared to be contingent on them being sufficiently valued and secure in their status.



**Table 1 the rise and fall of probation - key dates**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
1876	The appointment of the first Police Court Missionary.
1907	The Probation of Offender Act – probation officers place on a statutory footing to ‘advise assist and befriend’ probationers.
1925	Appointment of female probation officers required through Home Office guidance but not yet a statutory responsibility.
1930	Probation Advisory Board established in the Home Office. Home Office training scheme established.
1934	Cessation of Police Court Missionary appointments.
1936	Establishment of Probation Inspectorate.
1948	The Criminal Justice Act 1948 in which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the Home Secretary was given responsibility for probation;</li><li>• SERs became a statutory responsibility;</li><li>• probation committees were required to appoint female probation officers.</li></ul>
1960	Parole introduced.
1962	Morison Committee Report, which led to substantial improvement in pay and conditions.

1965	The London Probation Service ceased to be managed by the Home Office.
1967	Life licences introduced.
1970	Publication of the Seebohm Report – leading to a massive growth in social services and management opportunities.
1971	CQSW introduced as the qualification for probation officers.
1972	Community Service and Suspended Sentence Supervision Orders introduced nationally.
1973	Bail hostels introduced.
1983	Closure of the Home Office training course
1984	Statement of Nation Objectives and Priorities produced by the Home Office.
1985	Home Office (internal) review of training.
1988	Home Office (Coleman) review of training. National Standards for Community Service introduced.
1989	CQSW transformed into the DipSW. Home Office commissioned review of training (Davies and Wright).
1990	Home Office publications "Partnership for Dealing with Offenders in the Community", "Crime Justice and Protecting the Public" and "Supervision & Punishment in the Community". All dealt with the new role anticipated for the probation service – more offenders to supervise more rigorously. They also suggested that some probation

tasks might go to the private or voluntary sectors, a national service might be established and training should be more appropriate to probation's needs).

1991

HMIP placed on a statutory footing, reporting directly to the Home Secretary.

Criminal Justice Act 1991 passed with the 'twin track approach to offenders'.

1992

Probation Order National standards introduced.

Home office 3 Year Plans for the probation service introduced

1994

Dews and Watts commissioned to undertake a review of training

Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 – dismantling much of the CJA 1991 and establishing new and tougher sentences (Secure Training orders, reviews of 'unduly lenient sentences', curfews and powers of confiscation).

1995

Probation training removed from social work and higher education.

## **CHAPTER 4: Professionalization, discourse and gender.**

This chapter addresses the methodological issues which arise from seeking to research a profession in a period of gender transition and status decline, as well as the profession's attempts to regain lost status. The research aims to make a new contribution to both the theoretical understanding and empirical knowledge of gender and profession through the analysis of one profession's reprofessionalizing project. Methodologically, I build on the work of others in the analysis of texts but utilise this approach in a new way interpreting texts as resources for profession creation rather than as accounts of events or things. In this chapter I set out the broad aims of the thesis, address how a discourse analytical approach can inform our understanding of professions and gender and detail the specific research questions to be addressed and the methods used to answer them.

### **Research aims**

In the previous chapter I explored the fluctuating status of probation according to its gendered composition and the government's attempts to deprofessionalize probation when the number of women probation officers increased to over 50%. The research is primarily concerned with probation's response to the government's agenda. By analysing written probation texts the study will consider how probation has constructed the probation task and probation officers in order to protect its status in a period of decline. It seeks to establish the key characteristics probation promotes as being central to its construction of a credible and needed profession. It centres, therefore, not on the characteristics of profession as exemplified by probation, and makes no attempt to identify these;

but the characteristics probation appears to believe to be key indicators of profession as evidenced by their promotion of them. By undertaking an analysis of the traits put forward by probation, the belief systems about professional traits will be revealed.

This is a very different approach to that of trait theorists who have sought to identify a set of common characteristics shared by occupations they considered to be professions. As outlined in Chapter 2, such an approach is flawed in that it does not explore masculinity as a shared characteristic and it presupposes profession prior to establishing the characteristics. Had trait theorists included women's occupations such as nursing or teaching as exemplars of professions, then it is likely that a different set of characteristics identified as equalling profession would have been established.

The intention of the research is to reveal the role and place of gender - masculinity, in the construction of the new probation profession. In doing so I am not seeking to determine whether gender *is* a trait of profession but whether it is constructed as a trait through the profession's discourse by those engaging in a (re) professionalizing project. In other words **did probation present in a gendered way in order to enhance its status claims? Did it indicate, through its discursive use, a belief in the trait of masculinity as an identifier of profession?** The literature on the professions indicates that gender as an occupational construct has been previously examined in criminal justice occupations (Martin and Jurik 1996), but through an analysis of organizational behaviour rather than textual discursive constructions. Notably too, the focus of

that research was on occupations dominated by men - police, prisons and law. This research offers a new approach by exploring the place of masculinity in a female dominated profession.

In this research I do not ask those involved in the professional project about any *intentions* regarding the construction of the new probation, nor do I seek to explore the changing nature of the probation task as it is produced and reproduced on a daily basis. Whilst reflective practitioners are undoubtedly aware of the role of gender in the construction of the probation task (Annison 1998), the research seeks to identify the discursive outcomes *regardless* of the intentions of those creating them. The texts are carefully crafted, permanent and undeniable records, untainted by hindsight or knowledge of the outcomes of their contribution. They do not have a view that may be influenced by or is dependent on the researcher's line of enquiry. They achieve precisely what they were designed to achieve, knowingly or not. This approach enables me to engage with the hegemonic nature of profession as evidenced in probation's construction of its professional practice through discursive means. In other words, it is concerned with how probation as an institution, rather than individuals, creates a credible professional through textual means.

### **Discourse analysis**

Discourse is the written, spoken and visual communication or interaction undertaken by groups as they negotiate the meaning of their world and its constitutive elements. Through discourse we construct and shape our understanding of the world and our part in it. Ways of thinking and speaking

follow certain patterns conforming to our constructed worldview, foreclosing other options and discourses. Discourse defines problems, speaks as a 'truth' at a particular moment in time and in a particular place and in so doing excludes other truths and realities. Yet, discourse is more than meaning making or semiosis. Not only do discourses frame and set our understanding of the social world but they 'systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault 1972: 49). So discourses on unmarried mothers, for example, constitute them as 'immoral', 'irresponsible' and 'undeserving' (Carrabine 2001) and discourse on madness (currently) defines socially out of place behaviour as bio-pathology (Foucault 1971).

New discourses build on existing discourses, finding the threads from the past, accommodating and incorporating other discourses and cohering around common understandings of the topic whilst at the same time reconstituting the topic. Whilst discourses, over time, are transformational

it is not easy to say something new; it is not enough for us to open our eyes, to pay attention, or to be aware, for new objects suddenly to light up and emerge out of the ground ..... the object does not await in limbo the order that will free it and enable it to become embodied in a visible and prolix objectivity; it does not pre-exist itself, held back by some obstacle at the first edges of light. It exists under the positive conditions of a complex group of relations (Foucault 1972: 44-45).

Foucault describes the process through which discourse transforms as 'discursive relations', the relations between 'institutions, economic and social processes,

behavioural patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterisation' (Ibid: 45).

Whilst we might examine, for example, institutional or public discourses at micro and macro levels, the relationships between the discourses is also key in coming to an understanding about how they have shaped and constructed objects. So, for example, in the mid 20 Century homosexuality was a sign of mental illness, in the 1980s it was a 'glamorous' or 'exotic' but still 'deviant' lifestyle and now it is a 'market niche' (the pink pound). Here we see the influence of a number of discourses – medical, social, rights, economic, lifestyle and more. Homosexuality is negotiated, through each new generation of meaning and constituted through previous and new discourses. However, discourses are not only constitutive of the objects of the topic, they constitute other objects. The discourse on unmarried mothers will define 'good' and 'bad' mothering for all mothers and being a 'good' mother may be to have a husband – or at least a man to pay the bills of parenthood. The discourse on offenders also defines and constitutes those citizens that are 'law abiding', those that are 'ex' offenders and those that have yet to offend but are at 'risk' of offending.

Foucault contends (1971; 1972) that discourse also constitutes power. The authority of expertise is established through written, formal or public discourse – academic, journalistic, political etc. Only certain people have the right to participate and many participants will not necessarily be heard because they lack authority whilst power is accrued through the process of contributing to the discourse. Foucault's approach to discourse analysis, genealogy, explores the



relationship between discourse, power and knowledge and he, historically, examines discourses to trace the evolution of current knowledge and power relations.

### **Professions and discourse**

Professions too are created through discursive practices. A particular area of knowledge does not exist until it is created, developed articulated, bounded and reproduced. The fields in which professionals operate are created and negotiated through discursive practices (Foucault 1975). He argues that a problem has firstly to be created which is amenable to influence by the occupation. The knowledge for the resolution of the problem is then created to 'solve' it. This constitution of a field of knowledge is not a single activity but one that is interwoven and integral to the process of professionalizing and the defence of professional knowledge and boundaries once they have been successfully constructed.

Fournier too explores how professional knowledge is ever changing as needs for its re-constitution emerge. She discusses how the marketization of professional services has led to the reconstitution of professional fields and knowledge and how 'it can be reinvented to map onto market considerations' (Fournier 2000: 81) or any other external developments that would otherwise threaten the profession. The new consumer emphasis of professionals is an example of how professional knowledge has been reconstituted to take account of new market expectations. In a similar way, entrepreneurial and 'business like' approaches to the delivery of professional services also demonstrate the relationship between new 'considerations' and the development of new knowledge to meet them.

## **Approaching Discourse**

Discourse analysis as a means of analysing language as a *system of signs* in order to identify the functions served by the texts (or conversations, pictures etc.) derives from the unpublished work of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). Roland Barthes then extensively developed it in the 1950s as a means of studying culture. Discourse analysts seek to link texts with their wider effects such as how spoken or written texts constructs individuals including the self and different groups in society. Discourse analysis has proved to be a useful tool for linguists, psychologists, social psychologists and sociologists as well as a means of analysing literary texts or the 'media', particularly advertisements. For sociologists, the analysis of the social construction of groups through discourse, or, in Foucauldian terms, the power to define self and others, is at the heart of the discourse analytical approach. The discursive construction of or the definition of privileged or subordinated groups has the potential to reinforce oppressive relationships such as gender and class and, through exposing how language promotes and sustains oppression, discourse analysis can have a liberating quality (Derrida 1978).

Two approaches to discourse analysis dominate the sociological literature: a critical approach to discourse in which the purpose is to reveal how power relationships are sustained in order to meet wider oppressive interests such as capitalism, ethnicism or sexism; and a genealogical approach based on the work of Foucault in which discourse is analysed historically in order to understand the present. Both consider language as constitutive of the objects discussed but their

difference lies in their purpose, scale, scope and approach to texts in order to achieve their intended purpose.

### *Critical discourse analysis*

The objective of critical discourse analysis

‘is to show how language figures in social processes. It is critical in the sense that it aims to show non-obvious ways in which language is involved in social relations of power and domination, and in ideology’ (Fairclough 2001: 229).

Fairclough, based on the work of Bhasker (1986) goes on to outline a four staged approach to the analysis of discourse.

**Table 2 Summary of critical discourse analysis processes**

Stage	Process
1	Focus on a social problem that has a semiotic aspect.
2	Identify obstacles to the social problem being tackled (Most likely located in network of practices, relationship between practices, discourse)
3	Consider whether the social order (network of practices) ‘need’ the problem i.e. who benefits from the status quo?
4	Identify possible ways past the obstacles i.e. possible changes in social life.

Adapted from ‘An analytical framework for CDA’ (Fairclough 2001: 236)

Fairclough also advocates a further stage of reflection on the process and position of the analyst. Central to the approach is the identification of the discourse related social problem which the analysis is intended to reveal, for example, racism, and the role of the problem in sustaining power relations in the wider community. The analysis of the text involves the identification of the structures, interaction, interdiscursive and linguistic elements which construct and maintain the social problem. The focus of research activity in critical discourse analysis is in the literary techniques or the 'linguistic and other semiotic details of texts' (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999:63).

Using this model the discourse analyst might, for example, spotlight the problem of 'immigration' as one that is a semiotic dimension of racism i.e. that current understandings of the term immigrant have the capacity to problematise people of other races who move from one country to another permanently or semi-permanently. The analyst might identify the obstacles as the construction of immigrants as people to fear or even pity, resulting in their detention or the provision of charitable help. In terms of who needs the problem, the analyst might identify those with an interest in increasing newspaper circulation, their viewers or readers, politicians, security companies or manufacturers in the global economy. Finding ways past the obstacles might include changing policies or practices but change might also include attempts to recreate immigrants as additional labour resources or as positive influences on educational attainment in inner city schools.

Critical discourse analysis is located in the present and seeks to identify the linguistic mechanisms and media operating at the point of analysis. The past is not the source of the present but the context within which the present discourse is constructed. In identifying how current discourse serves current 'political' purposes, the analysis is multi-disciplinary incorporating political, sociological, media and literary knowledge. As attention is directed at linguistic or rhetorical devices used to construct objects within a single text or a number of texts, critical discourse analysis is limited in its ability to explore or examine the range of discourses across different texts and over time. In seeking to expose linguistic devices, the approach does not allow for the range of voices or constructions that may be apparent across a wider range of related but different texts.

Analysts, using a critical approach, analyse the texts of government, industry, advertising and other powerful players in social and economic life to ascertain how the texts contribute to the creation of super and subordinated groups. They also analyse the texts of subordinated groups in the defence of their position. Even so it assumes a uni-dimensional relationship between the intentions of the writer (s) (or speaker) and discourse outputs. The contribution of discourses, other than the specific one being examined, are viewed as contextual material or a spur to text production rather than as another powerful contributor. It is assumed that those who commission texts or have the pen in their hands have the freedom and power to create texts as they chose, other texts or discourses acting only as a constraint.

Yet discursive rules go much wider than the individual texts for examination. They incorporate the rules about who will have a voice, under what circumstances, in what format and the topic parameters. The discursive practices to which both promoters or dissidents submit are much greater than those implied by the texts they produce. There is more that joins them than separates them in the production of discourse. Whilst there are competing discourses in probation, the differences are at the margins and the probation discourse was only marginally different to that of the government with which it was in conflict. A Foucauldian approach which understands discourses as multi-dimensional, networked and less oppositional seemed therefore a more useful approach to analysing probation discourse. So, whilst this research is critical in intent and shares some elements of critical discourse analysis, it is also Foucauldian in approach.

#### *Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis*

A Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis is more a set of principles on which an analysis might be based rather than a methodology. The approach considers how individuals, groups or behaviour are constructed to promote them as a legitimate site for activity or objects of curiosity to be known about or understood. It reveals the conditions and circumstances in which people or objects become the focal point of the 'gaze'. Such an approach analyses how subjects are identified as being appropriate for attention and are then classified, measured, observed and ultimately created as a particular entity. A Foucauldian approach identifies the means and processes of construction and the resources (knowledge) available to the project. Of significance are the discursive practices

that enable the subject to be controlled or 'disciplined' into required behaviour or classification. Once the subject has been created as meriting attention for example as a criminal, an employee or as a single mother, their behaviour can be legitimately monitored and observed. Observation as a means of control may be through direct means i.e. to watch over but also through indirect means such as measuring progress (such as growth, illness, educational attainment and so on) or, more recently the electronic monitoring of 'traffic' or activity such as call volume in call centres, e-mails or (electronic) site visits. Central to a Foucauldian analysis is how these disciplinary practices become self-regulatory with behaviour conforming to that required by powerful disciplinarians. On a macro level, for example, discursive practices have led to the construction of acceptable sexual behaviour, which now includes (in the main) homosexuality but excludes paedophilia. Convicted paedophiles will be subject to long periods of supervision whilst on the Sex Offender Register whilst spies seem to be no longer 'watched' for any potential homosexual activities as a risk to national security.

Foucault rejected the notion of a powerful elite creating and dominating discourses although recognising that they might appropriate discourse to further their own interests. He also rejected the traditional Marxist 'power over' thesis (and the basis for critical discourse analysis) with uni-dimensional competing discourses and practices. He identified a more complex array of relationships and possibilities, particularly in the exercise of institutional power. His approach is similar to that of Clegg who traces power through the networks of processes, institutions, systems and significant nodes through which it must travel (Clegg 1989), Foucault traces the current knowledge through the discourse, practices,



strategies and relations of power and he sees these relations as temporary, shifting and networked. Central to understanding Foucault's genealogy is the relationship between power and regulatory outcome. People readily submit to the definitions and constructions provided by the 'experts' as to do so is in their interests, self regulation being less painful than the exercise of external controls over behaviour or the use of force. This post structuralist approach allows us to consider power and influence through the knowledge and authority base of organizations and the routes and access points to influential others and institutions.

To examine the discourse without understanding the power and authority of the participants or the processes through which they exercise their authority is an incomplete one. Examining discourses within the context of their production and their place within the overall network of discursive and power relations also enables us to consider the micro level 'disciplinary practices' embodied in discourse (Foucault 1977). To effect change, governments' (or other powerful players') discourse on a topic must be relevant to ordinary people and conducted in such a way that it will be supported by ordinary people in their day to day micro level discourses. For example the government's macro level spoken and written texts on sex offenders was both a contributor to and a consequence of the dominant discourse on sex offenders. The dominant discourse was not only developed by the government, the press and institutions with an interest but also by the discourse 'on the streets'. The discursive rules required all spokespeople to express condemnation of sex offenders, support for victims and the understandable anxiety of communities, without which none would have a legitimate voice.



A Foucauldian approach also recognises the contributions of a range of 'knowers' whose interests have to be incorporated in order to influence the new discourse – policy makers, religious leaders, academics, professionals, trade unions, managers as well as politicians and government officials. It also enables us to consider the discursive contributions of the resisters, dissenters, marginals and dissidents, not as distinct contributions in different texts (as a critical approach might) but in their role in forming the dominant texts. This is achieved through the incorporation of minority views or the modification of positions in a text to reduce dissent (which might thereby, expose the texts as lacking authority) to gain ascendancy for the dominant view. Discourse itself is a product of competing interests and its very existence exposes a contrary view. For example, I think it unlikely that the current dominant business discourse on the 'global economy' would be necessary if such a thing as the global economy existed without any dissent.

In the introduction to this thesis I explained how Foucault's analysis of madness offered a conceptual framework for examining the problem. Foucault explored the meaning of madness prior to its appropriation by medicine as a disease. In doing so he re-discovered voices which had been silenced through the constitution of madness as a disease. It was his project of giving silence a voice, to dig deep into the archaeology of that silence to what madness was before taken over by experts, primarily psychiatry, that seemed to offer a way forward for this research. I wanted to explore silence or absence of a construction as much as I wanted to explore what had been constructed. Derrida has criticised the basis of Foucault's enterprise arguing that by giving madness a voice, the texts capture madness and

rationalise it in a similar way to psychiatry or other 'experts' (1978). He also indicates that if these silences can be captured for analysis then they are not silences but have tangible entities. Whilst Derrida's criticisms are important for this research, it does not negate the approach. If the silence I seek to give voice to is not absolute, the noise it makes is certainly mute. The approach offers the possibility of exploring in greater detail aspects of social relations which, although not hidden from view, are infrequently exposed for airing. My ambitions remain modest and I do not claim more for the approach than that it offers a way of thinking about what requires analysis and the lens through which it can be viewed.

My approach utilises the concepts of discourse, power and knowledge in the analysis of the construction of probation officers and the probation task. Unlike Foucault, I have not traced the genealogy of words, elements or representations, my time frame is too short for that, but the research reveals the more recent historical points at which new concepts, references or understandings emerge. I make comparisons between two time periods that are not far apart whilst making links with previous discourses on probation, social work and women's professions.

### *Using texts*

Foucault maintains that 'man' constitutes himself as a social being through discourse. In much the same way, the construction of probation tasks, processes and roles is achieved through discourse. In constructing probation as a welfare or social work service for offenders or, more recently as a criminal justice service,

the probation task, the staff employed to deliver it and the measures used to evaluate its success are derived from these constructions. The discourse also reflects current understandings of the terms 'probation' and 'profession', whilst at the same time it changes, confirms or denies these understandings. This discourse takes a number of forms. It is apparent in the day-to-day interaction of probation officers as they go about 'accomplishing' probation. It is apparent in the written discourse and it is apparent in the official or unofficial representation of probation in the media.

Written texts have always played an important part in probation practice. For example, probation officers have a long tradition of providing written information to courts and others with a view to influencing sentencing and the National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO) produced a professional journal from its earliest days. It is, however, only in the last two decades that so much has been written about probation practice though guidance, handbooks, policy documents, position statements and the like. It is only in the last decade that probation officers have sought to know what is expected of them from the written word as opposed to consultation with colleagues or reliance on professional judgement. This development coincides with the trend towards the exercise of control over professional practice being undertaken by groups other than the professionals themselves and the standardisation of practice being achieved as much through procedures and guidance as through initial training.

By writing things into a documentary format, we can translate them from the specific and the local, and make of them 'facts' and 'records' which take on an independent existence. Some texts become 'official', and can

become 'proof' of events and identities. Some can enshrine what are taken for 'facts' (Atkinson and Coffey 1997: 57).

As managers and governments have sought more control over probation practice so has the volume of written discourse increased as the primary means through which they are able to exercise influence. As the volume of managerial or government material has increased, the profession has responded and made its own statements about probation practice. Occasionally this becomes a 'war of words' as these powerful knowers frame and shape the discourse and determine the legitimate areas for their public expression.

The strategic use of written media for 'consigning' materials and disseminating consigned materials across sites in an effort to enrol, enlist, convince, persuade, criticise or attack opponent-actors also appears to be given special emphasis by actors during periods of internal conflicts and struggle when professional or other social work actors experience a sense of having their own interests, objectives and aspirations 'threatened' in some way (Sibeon 1991: 45).

And so it is with the probation discourse. The documents relating to the protection of training or those used as a resource for the professional project were produced in response to a direct threat to the profession and are as much an effort to convince as they are reflections of the situation at the time.

I am reading the discourse in the knowledge of who the producers are, their standpoints or those of the organisations they represent and the political context within which the documents have been produced (Giddens 1979). In the same

way that autobiographical accounts give a particularly singular account of events, thoughts and feelings so too do official documents and records.

Authors will have interests in presenting themselves in a (usually) favourable light; they may have an axe to grind, scores to settle, or excuses and justifications to make..... For some purposes, such considerations must be treated as potential sources of 'bias' in accounts of this sort. But the sources of 'bias' are, looked at from another perspective, data in themselves. As we noted in the previous chapter, as important as the 'accuracy' or 'objectivity' of an account is what it reveals about the teller's interests, perspectives, and presuppositions (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983: 160).

In this research, the 'bias' of the material I examine is significant data. All the documents have, in some way, a role in presenting the image of the probation officer in the best possible light. The image that is created is therefore the one that is thought to be that which will give the greatest credibility to the probation officer. It therefore represents the ideal and gives a good insight into the profession's view of what the ideal probation officer might look and act like. Yet, there are very few 'authors', texts having been written by committee and presented as the voice of a range of individuals or organisations. The texts become anonymous, free ranging and independent of those that originally produced them. They gain authority, not only through the knowledge or power of the writer(s) as an authorised 'knower' but also through the adherence to discursive rules and it is these discursive rules that the researcher is intent on understanding and revealing.

### *The limits to the approach*

The institutional probation discourse is produced by committees or working groups, senior managers, academics and civil servants and considerable professional and institutional power is in evidence in the documents. The majority of the contributors are men but few are black men. The discourse is not necessarily representative of practitioners, the majority of whom are women who do not participate in the construction of official discourse. Such sources therefore

‘are subject to a further sort of ‘bias’ in that they tend to over-represent the powerful, the famous, the extraordinary, and the articulate (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983: 160).

Being a ‘professional’ is not necessarily always in the best interests of clients, or those who use, willingly or unwillingly, the services of a professional. ‘Professional’ practice, particularly that which conforms to an androcentric masculine understanding of profession, may disempower already disadvantaged groups further (Hamner and Statham 1988; Dominelli and McLeod 1989; Langan and Day 1992). Participation in professionalizing activities, therefore, may be viewed by some members of the profession as colluding with the oppression of service users (Ferguson 1984; Watson 1992). It is highly possible therefore, that although the powerful knowers, those authorised to speak for the profession, may seek to re-professionalize through the profession's public discourse, their efforts may be ignored, refuted or resisted in probation officer's day-to-day practice and social interaction.

There will be probation officers who dissent from the changing construction of probation and occasionally their efforts appear in the discourse, presenting as a singular dissident voice in an, otherwise, hegemonic articulation of the new probation task. Consequently, an opposing discourse may only rarely be evident in the professional journals or policy documents but may be heard in staff rooms or evidenced through interaction with clients. Resistance to the dominant discourse is included where it appears in the Journals selected but I have not analysed the informal probation discourse or that of minority groups. I am not assuming that there was universal acceptance of the dominant discourse but I am assuming that an absence of *outright* public opposition was an indication that the texts examined had been sufficiently carefully crafted as to be, if not acceptable, difficult to refute. This is the crux of discourse creation. In building on existing discourses and incorporating, at least to some degree the voices of likely dissenters, the new probation was constructed as different but not so very different as to be immediately identified as being 'not probation'. Thus resistance can be measured not in column inches given to opposition but in the limits it imposes on writers. For example, and as I demonstrate later, probation did not reconstruct itself as a military occupation as to have done so would have immediately brought opposition from a predominantly female and social work trained workforce. Opposition would indicate a lack of consensus and reduce the authority of the texts. To retain authority, texts required the retention of something akin to probation whilst at the same time having the capacity to move probation towards a new construction.



My focus is both on the macro level powerful professional and institutional discourse of probation as a significant, if not the only means, of producing a new probation profession and the micro level discursive practices of individual contributors. In this thesis I do not claim that the discourse is a representation of social reality or is even a representation of what the majority of the profession would wish to see as social reality but that it is a means of constructing reality by those who are ascribed the status of 'knowers' within the profession (Larson 1977). Discourse is, therefore only that which powerful or determined actors intend others to believe, whilst also having the capacity to produce and reproduce the subjects of the text. Discourse, then, is a powerful, if somewhat uncertain, instrument of change.

### **Research questions**

In this study I will analyse probation's discursive attempts to reconstruct probation into a credible profession. To do so, I will examine texts as a professionalizing resource. Both the construction of the probation officer and the probation task are analysed in order to reveal the characteristics the profession is promoting as its own. In doing so, the research will critically assess the role of gender. Specifically, the research sets out to reveal those characteristics valued by the occupation in their professionalizing project and whether or not those characteristics are generally associated with one gender or another. It also sets out to explore if the valued characteristics have changed over time.

There are primarily two research questions for discourse analysts; 'how is discourse put together, and what is gained by this construction' (Potter and



Wetherell 1987:160). This study tackles these issues in reverse order. I firstly set out the need to change the construction of probation in the light of the government's intentions to deprofessionalize it. The previous chapter brings the study up to the point of the profession's decline and in the following chapter I explore in more detail the specific threats faced by the profession. The question is not so much 'what is gained' but what would otherwise be lost without a reconstruction of probation. The main body of the research then centres on an analysis of the discourse and how it is 'put together', finally returning to the gains to be achieved from reconstruction.

The research questions fall into three broad themes:

- professional project;
- the role of discourse; and
- profession and gender.

### *Professional project*

In 1995, in response to the government's determination to remove the qualification to practice, probation had a number of options it might have pursued. It might have

- done nothing and let the government's policies take their course;
- repositioned itself as an occupation in the law and order field and perhaps aim for status and rewards to be commensurate with the police as a community based law enforcement agency;
- defended probation as a caring social work profession as both legitimate and needed; or,

- it might have reconstructed itself as a different, more marketable profession.

The first question, therefore, is what did probation do, as evidenced from its discourse on training and recruitment in response to the government's de-professionalizing agenda? I seek to know what sort of project was necessary and whether probation engaged in a (re) professionalizing project or some other means of responding to the government. I also question the strategy pursued, the assumptions on which the strategy is based and how the execution of the project related to intended outcomes. In looking in detail at how the project is conducted in the texts and its content I am seeking to identify the rules of engagement and who or what institutions determine the rules and are party to them.

#### *The role of discourse*

The analysis of probation discourse is central to this thesis and it is through discursive means that probation's activities are evidenced. In drawing on Foucault's theories of discourse as a powerful creative tool, my second major question for the thesis is what is the role of discourse in the creation of probation? Which discourses does probation draw on in promoting its cause - training, social work, punishment, public service, law and order etc.? I explore the influence of other discourses and the geography of the discursive space in which probation operates. I question how this both positions probation within particular discursive fields and excludes probation from others. I ask to what extent creativity is circumscribed by discursive rules and relationships and the power relationship between other discourses and participants.

### *Profession and gender*

The third theme and a central aim of the research is to increase our understanding of the relationship between discursive practices, their gendered outcomes and professionalization. Methodologically, I examine in detail, how the various probation discourses are created. I am seeking to know who creates them and whether there is a relationship between the gender of the creators and discourses they create. I also seek to identify the creative techniques and their effects; how is a probation officer and a professional constructed and what sort of occupation is created from the construction? Further, I explore whether the probation officer is a gendered entity and the relationship between this and profession.

Drawing on trait and project theories, I ask if certain characteristics are promoted as warranting professional status for those who demonstrate them. I also ask what these characteristics are and if they are gendered. In doing so I consider the extent to which the traditional traits associated with the professions, those belonging to gentlemen, continue to be promoted as relevant or whether the traits that probation promotes as deserving of status reflect different societal assumptions about who or what it is to be a professional in the 1990s.

Following this analysis of the discourse my final question for the research is who gains from a particular construction of probation - who were the beneficiaries and how have they benefited? What groups and what roles gained most and which groups have lost as the discourse creates and recreates the task and the officer? What is the relationship between the beneficiaries and gender?

**Table 3 Summary of research questions**

Research Themes		
Professional Project	Role of discourse	Profession and gender
What type of project did probation engage in to protect its status?	What is the role of discourse in the project?	What is the relationship between the gender of the authors of texts and their contribution to the emerging probation discourse?
How was the project conducted and by whom?	What are the relevant discourses on which probation draws?	How is the probation officer and profession constructed?
How were the expected outcomes related to the strategy?	What discursive space is available to probation, how is it utilised and how is it circumscribed?	What characteristics are promoted as deserving of status and held by probation?
What were the rules of engagement?	What are the discursive rules and how are they created i.e. what/who are the powerful interests they serve?	What is the relationship between the new construction of probation and gender?
	Are the discursive rules gendered?	Who or what groups benefit from the new construction of probation?

### **Data collection and analysis**

My primary resources for the research are a range of documents and texts produced by the profession over a decade (1987-1997). These include the written responses to the government's proposals for the profession and professional training; internal professional association documents produced for members in support of the profession's line; publicity material targeted at the general public and government, including probation internet sites (only 2 probation services had Internet sites during the period of this research); the documentation relating to probation training prior to and post the new arrangements and the discourse on the new cognitive fields conducted in the professional journals.

The production of discourse is shaped by the context within which it is created and understanding the context and the motivation of the creators is key to this research. Historical accounts of probation and policy and other documents have been used to background the texts for analysis. These materials have been analysed, not as resources for the reprofessionalizing project, but as accounts of probation. My own experience as a probation officer from 1979 to 1996, including management responsibility for training, responding to the government's training proposals and the marketing/PR brief for one local probation service has also contributed to my understanding.

In order to more firmly set the analysed texts within a social and political context and to ensure my understanding derived from practice was not a unique one, I also interviewed key members of the profession who ran the campaign to re-professionalize and carry through the new arrangements for training. I spoke to

those who had a primary role in negotiating with the Home Office on the new training arrangements and those who were responsible for probation's communications about its work in ACOP, NAPO and also the CPC (Central Council for Probation Committees). Of the seven key people interviewed, six were men. Four started their careers in probation and one in social work in the 1970s, whilst one was not social work trained. Four had been associated with training matters all their careers either through NAPO or ACOP, or both. All were official spokespersons for probation on training or PR matters. The Schedule of topics used for discussion is attached as Appendix 2.

The documents analysed for the research have three major audiences - the government and other influential sponsors of the profession; members of the profession and other professionals; and the lay public, including potential future members of the profession. Guidance to staff, policy documents and professional papers are targeted at professional and other staff but may also be copied to government officials, the press or individual members of the public to explain policy. Professional Journals (Probation Journal and Vista) are targeted on a professional audience, the Probation Journal speaking mainly to practitioners and academics and Vista speaking mainly to practitioners and managers. The focus within both journals is on practice and research but they also cover probation management (although generally from different perspectives). People outside probation including civil servants in the Home Office, other professional groups and academics, read both journals. Those editing the journals are conscious of this, Vista, on occasions, giving the appearance of speaking particularly to

government using the journal as a 'window' for presenting the service (as distinct from the profession) well.

Publicity material and recruitment literature is aimed at the lay public except for recruitment literature used by local services to attract qualified probation officers from elsewhere. However, literature produced for public consumption is also used internally to reinforce images of the desired probation officer and gives a strong message to professionals and other staff about expected cultural and other norms. Recruitment and publicity literature presents only favourable information and is therefore significant in demonstrating the 'ideal' probation officer. Much of the literature is however about the probation *service* and includes information about the organisation and activities undertaken by staff other than probation officers.

### *Validity*

Whilst a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis offers a significant means of understanding how the social world is constructed through discourse, he left no coherent methodology on which to draw. Carabine suggests that in the absence of 'a 'how to' guide to genealogy', researchers tend to ensure 'the application of Foucault's concepts of discourse/power/knowledge and therefore (this is) the lens through which they read their data' (Carabine 2001: 268).

Potter and Wetherell (1987) in their guide to discourse analysis suggests that the validity of the findings relates to their '(a) coherence, (b) participant's orientation, (c) new problems, and (d) fruitfulness' (1987: 169). 'Coherence' is the extent to

which the analysis reveals patterns, exceptions can be explained and it can be shown how discursive rules produce certain outcomes. 'Ensuring participant's orientation' means, in the context of this research, demonstrating an understanding of the context and purpose of the texts, as indicated by the contributors in their writing. 'New problems' relates to the extent the analysis answers some problems but then raises others, i.e. that it continuously works towards improving understanding. 'Fruitfulness' is a test of the utility of the exercise, whether the analysis can make sense of the problem and has the potential to generate new solutions.

Whilst alert to all of these checks throughout the research, in selecting the material for analysis, I was primarily concerned with coherence and fruitfulness and was seeking, in particular, to ensure that the material included a wide range of texts speaking to different audiences and prepared by different groups or individuals within the profession. Given the context in which the professionalizing activities were being undertaken, it would be unsurprising if the profession had not attempted to influence the government through the written word. This would not, however, indicate a change in the probation discourse; it would merely reveal the profession's 'propaganda' attempts. Valid generalisations about a changing discourse could not be drawn without similar findings being readily visible across a range of publications with different audiences. The generalisations would also have more validity if they reflected individual as well as institutional discursive practices. Looking at a wide range of documents also enabled me to consider the changing discourse with three very different audiences with different expectations (government and policy makers,



external audiences and the profession). This allowed me to consider whether the discursive practices continued beyond the Conservative government and whether they were embedded in the profession's own internal discourse. Only if the professional discourse constructed the profession in a different way to *itself* over time could I be certain that any change had gained root and was not merely an external presentational device.

### *Selection of the material*

In part selection of the material was pragmatic. Its potential volume was immense and could not all be analysed in detail. It was important to cover how the representation of the service addressed the perceived needs of the government, the public and the profession itself. The selection was then largely dependent on identifying the material that most plainly spoke to these relevant audiences (see Appendix 1). I included all the (national) responses to the government's proposals for training, recruitment material, annual reports, campaigning reports and other publicity material from representative organisations covering the period 1994-1997 in their entirety. ACOP did not produce publicity material until 1999 and although it fell outside the period for my research, I have included it as it has a significant and important contribution to make to the analysis. Furthermore its development, if not publication, occurred within the time frame.

Where I have been more selective, is in the analysis of journal papers and books. I completed an initial analysis of all the papers written between 1987 and 1996 (and continued as the research progressed through to the end of 1999) in order to gain an overview of the themes and their presentation. I used this analysis to make

initial comparisons between earlier representations of profession and those pertaining to the research period. During this initial stage I identified those articles that seemed to offer an understanding of the changing presentation of the probation officer's role and characteristics. I returned to these articles for individual analysis in a purposeful way.

Although I considered, I have not included as evidence, papers published in journals or books that were not widely read in probation or by government officials. I was advised by probation librarians and information officers that, apart from the Probation Journal and Vista, there was not much call for other publications by probation officers and managers. In making my selection for presentation in this thesis, I prioritised those with the greatest capacity to influence i.e. those that were read. I have not included, for example, the following papers on training: Williams 1994; Williams 1995 (a) and (b); Ward and Lacey 1995; Nellis, 1996; Ward 1996. Prior to deciding not to quote from the texts listed above I checked that they were not markedly different to those I selected. They were not. This is primarily because all those authors played a major role in constructing the more widely read briefing and journal papers.

#### *Analysing, organising, and categorising*

Wetherell, Taylor and Yates describe discourse analysis as

relatively open ended and also circular, or iterative. The researcher is looking for patterns in the data but is not entirely sure what these will look like or what their significance will be. She or he must therefore approach the data with a certain blind faith, with a confidence that there is

something there but no certainty about what. Conducting analysis involves going over data again and again ..... noting features of interest .... Working through the data over quite a long period, returning to them a number of times (Wetherell, Taylor and Yates, 2001: 38-39)

The process of analysis was an iterative one. Firstly I briefly assessed all the written documentation in its totality to consider emerging themes. The material was collated and analysed chronologically, by producer, by themes and finally by *purpose* as the initial analysis suggested that the representation of the profession was not a uniform one and was very dependant on the audience. This initial analysis led to grouping or coding the documentary material into four broad areas 1) the profession's responses to the government on training 2) recruitment material designed to attract staff to the profession or service 3) publicity material designed to represent probation to the public and 4) journal articles representing the role and task of probation officers, primarily aimed at members of the profession.

Within each of these four areas I developed further subdivisions or coding and these were different according to how the material 'spoke' to the issues. I used a quantitative approach to establish the range of topics covered in the professional journals (Probation Journal and Vista) from 1994 to 1998 (Vista was produced from 1995 onwards). I 'added up' the number of papers on topics such as risk assessment, work with sex offenders or travellers. I also noted the sex and role, for example, practitioner, academic or manager of those contributing papers. A quantitative approach was also used in respect of the recruitment literature where

the representation of women and men as probation officers is compared over 2 time periods.

Most of the research is based on an individual analysis of each document using a 'critical-analytic' approach (May 1997). The process of analysis involved identifying and exploring the constructed entities of probation officers or probation tasks and the identification of the *absence or avoidance* of key words or themes.

The social world might be characterised by the exclusion of valuable information and the characterisation of events and people in particular ways according to certain interests (Ibid: 175).

In analysing the documents I was firstly analysing how the roles and tasks were constructed and then seeking to establish if they were gendered and if so how. An early initial appraisal of the range of documents suggested that there were masculine probation roles presented in the discourse and I developed a number of metaphors or codes, which I hoped, might be useful 'nets' in which to capture the data. The categories reflect new insights as I worked with the material and their identification was as much part of the analysis as a means of sorting the data for ease of use. The initial categories were 'knight', 'hero', 'scientist', 'macho man' and 'patriarch'. Later insights suggested a further category of 'manager'. There was one further masculine role that I thought might have been apparent from the discourse - the 'sportsman' - as I had noted considerable use of sporting metaphors by managers in their day-to-day 'management speak'; but I found no examples of this role in the written discourse.

Of the masculine roles I identified, the knight included those descriptions of probation officers protecting the public and 'rescuing' the vulnerable villagers, children or damsels from the predator in their midst; the hero was the probation officer that struggled against the odds with unpromising material to achieve the goals of preventing reoffending; the scientist was the technocrat or expert who fixed on effective practice and its measurement; the macho man was the tough controller and the patriarch was the probation officer who exercised control through the exercise of a benign consensual but firm authority. Inevitably there was considerable overlap between the categories and in some descriptions it was apparent that different types of masculinity were operating alongside each other.

I was also seeking feminine representations of the task and probation officers. In the initial appraisal of the material I did not find feminine roles expressed in the discourse. I then spent some time analysing documents from the 1980s to ascertain if there were any feminine roles expressed in the discourse during a more pro-feminine period. The only feminine role that appeared to be incorporated into the earlier discourse was that of social worker (rather than other possible feminine roles such as nurse, teacher, mother etc.). The first 'finding' of the research therefore, appeared to be that the 'old' probation discourse was not particularly 'feminine'. As in the new probation discourse I found an absence of any roles that might be described as feminine, the analytical task became identifying what alternatives to the masculine roles might have been offered or to identify those points at which a less masculine, i.e. social work, presentation had been offered in the past.

Potter and Wetherell in their guide to analysing discourse state that there is 'no discourse [analysis] equivalent to feeding results into a computer and then making sense of a limited pattern of significant and insignificant differences' (1987: 161). They go on to suggest that a limited amount of data is analysed or 'there is a danger of getting bogged down in too much data and not being able to let the linguistic detail emerge from the mountains of text' (Ibid.). Whilst I would have welcomed keeping the number of documents for analysis to a significant few, the range of documents and their audiences was crucial to my understanding of the professionalizing project and, I was reluctant (at least initially) to discard any material that was relevant or illustrative. There is no doubt that the range, which included a number of different styles of presentation, along with their different purposes frequently made it difficult to 'let the linguistic detail emerge', and I was 'required to read and reread large bodies of (transcripts and) documents' (Ibid.).

There are a number of avenues, which I initially pursued but did not progress much beyond an initial reading. For example, contemporaneous to the training debate, and a crucial part of it, there was a considerable interest in probation 'values' with a number of published texts. The volume of material devoted to this issue was considerable and could have made a study in its own right. The sheer volume of the material led me to foreclose on a detailed analysis and although informed by my initial observations, 'values' do not form part of the systematic analysis.

I analysed all the documents manually, highlighted relevant parts and collated the data in word processing files. I rejected scanning all the relevant documents into a computer-based package and then undertaking an electronic search for key words as the scanning activity would have taken a disproportionate amount of time (or I would have had to narrow my selection of material from the outset). In retrospect, but for different reasons, I think my approach was the right one.

The systematic reading and rereading of texts to seek patterns and similarities and differences was not necessarily fruitful at the time of the initial analysis, but reading unrelated texts often sparked new thinking and triggered an understanding about the topic. For example, I read 18 months worth of articles and letters by women on working with men responsible for domestic abuse and the new thinking that was emerging in some sectors of probation about its cause and solution. They addressed complex issues tentatively and with respect for a range of viewpoints. This was, to my mind, an example of women's contributions at their best. The debate was summarily closed by the final paper written by a male probation officer roundly criticising the previous female contributors for not adhering to a pro-feminist stance on domestic violence and reasserting its appropriateness as an ideology for practice. Whilst these texts still do not feature here as research evidence, the final (male) contribution lit up and illustrated for me, some of the theoretical issues about femininity, feminism and masculinity that I was struggling to understand.

Discovering new texts that shed light on a matter often required retrieving other texts and rereading them yet again. Knowing which texts to reread came only



from my familiarity with them in their paper form and an electronic search would not have 'remembered' the contents of a text that a manual approach provided. In this respect the analysis benefited from serendipity and intuition. Additionally, it also became apparent that it was often the absence of concepts that was significant and a narrow focus on key word would not have illustrated where alternatives were possible.

### **Research boundaries**

#### *The 'profession'*

By probation profession I mean all those who are professionally qualified as probation officers and working in the probation officer grades of the probation service in England and Wales whether they are practitioners, managers, teachers, academics or occupy other roles within the probation service. It includes those qualified under the Home Office training scheme prior to 1983 and those qualified through the Certificate for the Qualification in Social Work or the Diploma in Social work from 1971 to 1995.

I have excluded staff who are not professionally qualified but who are trained in the probation service. The development of NVQ awards and the integration of these through the accreditation of prior learning into the new Diploma for Probation Studies means that the boundaries between various grades and occupations within the service are not always clearly delineated and including only probation officer grades in the term 'profession' remains somewhat arbitrary. In treating profession in this way I am not endorsing any exclusionary tactics but,



in using the professional project as a conceptual framework for understanding the process of re-professionalization, it is necessary for boundaries to be drawn.

The lines are not neatly drawn. It is not always possible to identify which activities are expressly related to profession, management, trade union or employing organisation. Managers represent the probation service as well as the profession. The professional association is also a trade union and represents probation staff who are not qualified as probation officers. Both ACOP and NAPO compete for the role of professional leadership but both are careful in how this is expressed for fear of alienating other staff and interests that they represent.

#### *Access and ethical issues*

When I commenced the research I was an Assistant Chief Probation Officer and was later to join the Social Work Services Inspectorate in the (then) Scottish Office. In both of these roles I have had considerable access to materials and people that are relevant to the research. However, as the basis of the contact was other than as a researcher, I have used this knowledge to inform my thinking rather than as evidence for my conclusions. This has influenced my decision to restrict my research to material that is publicly available.

My position has enabled greater access to people and resources than might otherwise have been the case. Access to the influential people within the profession has been crucial to gaining an understanding of the social and political context in which the discourse has been constructed and I doubt if this would have been achieved had I not been viewed as a 'friendly' insider member of the

probation profession. My own long experience of working in probation at practitioner and manager level coupled with many years of active involvement in NAPO and ACOP provided me with considerable knowledge about the profession, its structures and how it operates. However, such intimate knowledge can also make it more difficult to stand back from the issues and approach the research questions objectively. I was helped in this by leaving the service fairly early on in the research.

*The areas that this research does not cover*

In this study I have focused on probation's attempts to reprofessionalize in the light of the government's dissatisfaction with the profession and its staff profile. The government also made particular mention of the numbers of black women and single women (Dews and Watts 1994). Whilst undertaking the research I was told by members of the profession who were involved in discussions with the Home Office that in commenting on single women the report was drawing attention to lesbians within the service and some respondents made reference to what they perceived as the government's preoccupation with this issue. I have not, in this research, specifically addressed how the profession has responded to this or how sexuality is addressed in the discourse.

Female occupations such as nursing and social work that have attempted to professionalize have been no more inclusive of working class, lesbian or black women than male professionals have been of women (Bryan, Dadze and Scafe 1985; Vicinus 1985; Zimmeck 1992). This thesis does not specifically address whether the representation of probation is white. Additionally, as the research

progressed, it became more apparent to me that many black people in the probation service are appointed to unqualified or non-professional posts in roles that relate to their ethnicity or colour, for example, working as interpreters or as group workers on programmes that work specifically with black offenders. Just as, in the early days of the professions, women justified their inclusion on the basis of their gender providing skills and attributes relating to the client group, so too are black people now. This is not addressed in the research and would perhaps be a relevant study in its own right.

### **Reflexivity and the research topic**

Reflexivity is 'the application of the theory back onto itself and its practice' (Burr 1995: 184). Although, unlike other forms of discourse analysis such as using conversational texts, my participation in the research process does not form part of document creation (Webb et al 1966), the selection of the material is of itself a constitutive act. This thesis, just as the documents I am researching, has been constructed for a particular purpose. The process of writing this account is one of actively creating a model of probation officers and the probation task in the text. I too, have brought forward characteristics and themes and backgrounded others.

A Foucauldian approach is not without its problems. Deconstruction is also reconstruction, one version of reality being replaced by another. Subsequent constructions may have no greater truth or validity than their predecessors. Valid methodology therefore lies in opening up the texts, as far as is possible, for other scrutiny and analysis and engaging reflexively with the texts in the course of the research. If Foucault's argument is right (1997), because my analysis *could* be

subjected to the disciplinary gaze, this will have acted as a self-governing or self-disciplining mechanism against fabrication and imagination.

This research is also about my own journey in understanding collective behaviour of which I was a part and which was not always congruent with my personal and political beliefs. In embarking on the research I was an 'insider' (Rosneil 1993). I joined the probation service as a probation officer in 1979 and at the point of starting the research I was an Assistant Chief Probation Officer. My progression into senior management had followed a fairly typical career route usually associated with men - long working hours, job changes in order to obtain a range of experience, moving probation areas on promotion and obtaining an MBA en route. However, alongside this I had also worked hard to bring a feminist perspective to the probation and management task, a perspective that took account of women's different experiences of work and the criminal justice system. I had been actively involved in the development of policies and practices designed to ensure probation was a more 'woman friendly' place to work and be supervised. I felt that considerable progress was made in the late eighties and early nineties but by the time I began my research I was less sure about the permanency of the gains and the climate seemed to be changing significantly.

It seemed to me that whatever feminist voice I had as both a main grade and managing probation officer had become subdued. When the government proposed removing probation training from higher education and removing it from social work, I was active in the profession's defence; preparing papers for my own service, for sentencers, the press and others and involved in marshalling the

arguments nationally for the defence of probation. I became conscious that I was not celebrating the numbers of women in the service or seeking to present the service in such a way as to emphasise the feminine qualities that might be apparent from such an occurrence. So, to restate, this research is a personal journey, an attempt to reveal and understand the discursive rules to which I was working, rules about which there was no discussion, no policy, no guidance and no formal means of identification or enforcement, but rules that can be revealed through the examination of the discourse.

### **Writing up the analysis**

It was apparent early on that probation was engaged in a reprofessionalizing project and that it had not chosen another route, such as repositioning itself as a frontline policing occupation, to protect its status and rewards. Thus I do not spend a great deal of time discussing whether or not probation was engaged in professionalizing activities.

The substantive part of the research is the analyses of the changing discourse. In writing up the research, Chapters 5 and 6 detail findings from probation texts. The findings demonstrate the new construction of probation and the gendered nature of the construction. In these chapters I demonstrate the construction of a masculine professional and identify gendered characteristics that are backgrounded or foregrounded to support the construction. I also discuss the building techniques and materials. In setting out my findings, I aimed for simplicity and the structure of these chapters is intended to expose the findings for scrutiny and to ensure coverage of as wide a canvass as possible whilst avoiding

duplication. I firstly address probation's response to the Home Office proposals and then examine the underpinning discourse in detail, using the 'nets' outlined above (knight, hero, manager etc) to group the findings.

Chapter 7 is a deeper exploration of the relationship between gender and profession and the role of the discourse in profession creation. In this chapter I systematically address the issues raised in the research questions and revisit their theoretical basis, challenging a number of existing theories in the process. As the research raises as many questions as it answers, I explore these too. The concluding chapter discusses, more widely, the implications of the research beyond the narrow confines of one profession.

## CHAPTER 5: Defending probation

In Chapter 3 I discussed probation's history which culminated in its loss of government support for the probation task in the early 1990s. The government's decision to deprofessionalize probation was the final, and very public, demonstration of how far probation's status had fallen in the preceding years. If it was to survive as a profession it had no choice but to reprofessionalize. In this and the following chapter I set out my findings. Through analysis of the discourse I reveal how the profession addressed the issue of gender in the reprofessionalizing project i.e. through the profession's written representations to the government, lay public and its own members.

The reprofessionalizing project does not have a start and end date. Many of the project activities began prior to the government's decision on training and the project still continues today as probation is by no means secure in its current position. The *focus*, however, of this research relates to those years 1994-1997 when activities were at their peak, as were the threats, with some additional material from ACOP published in 1999. Some documents used for analysis were those directly related to the campaign to keep probation training in higher education, others cover a longer period - publicity and recruitment materials, policy and guidance documents about the probation task and journal papers (see Appendix A). Whilst many of these documents were not prepared for the purpose of reprofessionalizing, they are project resources, shaping and promoting practice that was supported by the profession. All the documents have an existence beyond their original purpose and are a record of the profession's

anxieties and preoccupations at the time. Many still represent the official probation view on matters, not having been superseded by other documents.

In Chapter 3 I noted that the government's decision to deprofessionalize probation occurred as the profession became dominated by women in the main grade. This chapter investigates this in more detail, demonstrating first the close links between the government's deprofessionalizing agenda and its remasculinizing agenda, particularly through the employment of ex-service men. I then move on to explore the profession's response. The final part of the chapter reveals, prior to and post Dews, how men and women are portrayed in the recruitment literature. The following chapter addresses the changing nature of the probation task.

### **The Dews Report**

The Dews Report (Dews and Watts 1994) was commissioned by the Home Office in 1994. Unlike previous reports on probation training which were written by academics, it was undertaken by government 'scrutineers'. These were civil servants who considered problems, reported on them and moved onto the next item for scrutiny as part of the government's 'scrutiny programme'. Scrutineers did not usually have a background in the subject but were close to government thinking and expectations. It was evident from the report that the brief of the scrutiny team was to find a way of extricating probation training from the DipSW and from higher education.

We were asked to consider if probation officers should be statutorily required to have a social work qualification, which can *only* be obtained



by successfully completing a course based at University or College, and whether Home Office sponsorship of selected students specialising in probation studies on social work courses is the best way to fund probation officer training (Dews and Watts 1994:1) (emphasis mine).

The scrutineers could not meet the demands made of them. They commissioned independent advice from the Industrial Society which reported that not only was the current training ideal for the task required of probation officers but also it was the best that could be envisaged. The scrutineers asserted the need to keep training in higher education, at least to some degree, concluding that Masters degree courses were needed to ensure the calibre of future probation leaders and managers. They did recommend the removal of training from social work and made much of what they perceived to be 'political correctness' and 'obsession with 'anti-discriminatory practice'.

The government scrutineers were openly troubled by the high number of female officers in the service and thought it significant that there were (comparatively, with the rest of the UK population) a high number of black female officers and single women.

12% of respondents described themselves as afro-Caribbean or Asian - *well above the proportion of ethnic minorities in the general population. But the most striking statistic is that 68% were women....* The preponderance of women entrants is a fairly recent phenomenon...Many probation services commented to us on this trend and said it was

becoming unusual for older men to join the service after voluntarily leaving other work. Our informal meetings with probation staff also led us to wonder *if newly qualified probation officers included a higher proportion who were unmarried, separated or divorced than the general population...* these profiles are unimportant in themselves - there is no suggestion that sex or marital status is relevant to ability to be a probation officer. They are, however noteworthy as an indication that in some respects the probation service recruits a different profile from that of the adult population as a whole (Dews and Watts 1994:14-15) (emphasis mine).

No previous reviews of probation training had addressed the issue of workforce composition in terms of race or gender and it is quite extraordinary that marital status was raised in the report.

The scrutineers compared the number of single women to that of the general population rather than against working women or professional women. By noting the workforce composition and stating that it needed to change, the implication was unmistakable, that women, and black women in particular constituted the wrong profile of a desirable probation officer. The scrutineers did not comment on the small numbers of black male officers, although black offenders are disproportionately represented in both the prison and probation caseload and the proportion of black male officers was well below that of black men in 'the general population'. For some considerable time there had been disquiet about the low numbers of black or ethnic minority recruits into criminal justice occupations and the lack of black male probation officers, might well have been viewed as a

problem by the scrutineers. Stating that the level of female black probation officers was beyond that which might be expected given the national composition of ethnic minorities, whilst making no comment on the under-representation of black male probation officers, gives an impression of men's under representation being viewed as un-problematic to the scrutineers whilst women's over-representation is a problem.

Whilst the views in the report are those of the scrutineers, these were issues ministers had indicated they wished to see addressed in the report. Interviews, for this research, with members of the profession who were involved in discussions with both the ministers and their officials, suggest that the government was preoccupied with the number of women, the number of black women and the number of single women, having had it drawn to their attention that the service employed a number of lesbians, some in very senior positions. As one interviewee said

Howard (Michael) was very shocked about the number of lesbians in the probation service, it is far higher than in the general population, well, its a safe environment for lesbian probation officers, all say it is comparatively safe (NAPO).

It is not clear why the sexuality of probation officers should have become a relevant topic for ministerial discussion in relation to training.

### **The government's approach to gender change**

The first signs of the government's intention to change the profile of probation recruits and to make the occupation more attractive to men leaving the army occurred in 1992, quite some time before commissioning the Dews Report. In that year Home Office officials wrote to probation services to ask that they make contact with local military units and provide recruitment literature and give talks to armed service personnel. Most services simply ignored the request.

The government did not wait for the publication of the Dews Report, or the period of consultation on its findings to end before announcing in December 1994 that it intended to remove the requirement for probation officers to be qualified as social workers and to remove training from higher education. The Home Secretary made it clear, in a widely trailed interview with the Daily Mail on 29 December 1994 that he was

...determined to transform the role from counselling to control. He wants to see ex-army officers and retired policemen joining up to provide a more hard-nosed approach (Daily Mail 29/12/94).

and the headline to accompany the article read 'Howard calls up probation troops'

The Dews Report was completed in September 1994 but was not published until the following February. When the report was eventually published, it was released with a discussion paper prepared by the Home Office outlining its proposals for future training. The published proposals confirmed the

government's decision to remove the requirement for probation officers to have a social work qualification, to locate probation officer training within services, reduce the length of training and to allow only a minimum of academic input.

Later, the Home Secretary again reiterated his wish to see ex-military personnel employed as probation officers. Interviewees told me that in discussions with the Home Office it had been made plain that the ideal probation officer was a 'Sergeant major' with a loud voice who would 'command and control' offenders in a way that was not dissimilar to the control exercised by the army. Later, when considering the sectoral location of the new National Training Organisation for community justice, of which probation was the main employer:

...we were told by the mandarins to move it [community justice] from 12 (social care) to 13 (the armed services sector) (ACOP interviewee).

Meanwhile, throughout 1995 the government was promoting army involvement in the supervision of offenders through the provision of

...tough, physical challenges, demanding community work and positive training to acquire social skills (Home Office Press Release 11 July 1995).

and seeking armed services involvement in work with offenders. Whilst the government did not always specify that it was men they were seeking to fill vacancies, the use of the term 'policemen' and the dearth of female 'ex-army officers' were transparent indications that the government expected men to fill

these roles as there are very few women who would have been eligible. Or, as a Guardian headline read, ' Ex-soldiers sought to beef up probation' (Guardian on 27 June 1994).

The government's agenda in removing the requirement for probation officers to hold the Diploma in Social work was two fold. It, firstly, wished to make the service more attractive to men, particularly ex-military personnel:

concerned that the current recruitment and qualifying training deterred people from becoming probation officers.... Experienced individuals looking for a change of career, such as those in the police and the armed forces, who had good judgement and personal management skills, were being put off by the thought of returning to college to do a two-year course...(David McLean, Home Office minister in an internal HO memorandum to the Home Secretary leaked to the press and quoted in the Guardian on 27 June 1994).

and secondly it wanted to break the link between probation and social work

I reject the approach which equates punishment in the community with social work with offenders (Michael Howard speech to the National Probation Conference Speech on 16 March 1995).

The government was also dismissive of higher education. It wanted a job based training scheme where the new recruits would determine what they considered were the relevant skills rather than the profession:

... a new and more flexible scheme based on modules and on-the-job training. Individuals with the requisite skill would then be able to select the modules *they* regarded as relevant (David McLean, Guardian 27 June 1994) (emphasis mine).

One interviewee found that

Michael Howard was absolutely opposed to it (any new training arrangements) being taught in higher education; we tried every way we could to get round that (ACOP).

Having determined that higher education would have no place in probation officer training, university interests were not included in discussions with the Home Office (neither was NAPO) until 1996. Even then it was only after Baroness Blatch was forced to concede in the Lords debate a place for higher education in the future training of probation officers in the face of total opposition in the Lords (Hansard: 942 (Lords) 5/12/95) to the Home Office proposals.

Changing probation from a social work to a military occupation was both a transgendering and deprofessionalizing exercise. The government believed that it would be difficult to recruit ex-army personnel into the service if it required prior

training. Not only might it be difficult to recruit older people who could not afford to spend two years training on a very small income but the desired recruits were unlikely to have had previous experience of higher education and may have been reluctant to enter university in their middle years. The government could have chosen to remasculinize through offering higher salaries (training and post qualification) but this would have required more money and also would have been antithetical to all other public sector income and funding policies being pursued by the government at that time.

The government might have considered other training options as it did in 1990 when it first explored how probation training might be improved (Home Office 1990b). The government was then particularly concerned that the courses paid insufficient attention to 'probation law, penology, criminology and principle of sentencing' (Ibid.33); heavy weight masculine disciplines associated with law and generally only studied at university, often at post graduate level. At that time the government was dissatisfied with the DipSW (partially as a result of complaints from probation services and newly qualified officers) and considered four options, one of which was to set up a new qualification. All four options assumed probation training would continue to be located in higher education with the continuing option of a post graduate qualification. For reasons of cost the government did not set up a new probation qualification. Had it done so, probation might well have increased its professional status. Within less than four years of that review, the government had changed its view again and decided that deprofessionalizing was the only option.



Whilst it is possible that, had probation been male dominated in 1994, the government might have pursued a deprofessionalizing strategy, it seems unlikely. It did not do so in 1990 when worried about training and there are no examples of state sponsored deprofessionalization of male dominated professions. Furthermore, the government, during the same period, indicated that other women's professions were ripe for deprofessionalization. There were suggestions of introducing unpaid 'mum's armies' and 'street wise grannies' into teaching and social work respectively. The government did go as far as introducing a direct entrant scheme for teachers but few teachers gain qualifications through this route and the graduate qualification was not removed.

Ironically, the government's remasculinization strategy, through lowering the academic entry qualification, was a strategy that was chosen at the wrong time. Had the government increased probation funding and thereby increased the numbers of staff that could be appointed, it might have enabled a new class of entrants to be established within the service. However it embarked on the project at the same time that it was cutting probation budgets and services were either making staff redundant or recruitment was at a standstill. Whilst services were cutting staff the government was promoting the occupation to the armed services and careers services (army and civilian) noting the removal of the DipSW as the qualification to practice. Probation services all over the country received enquiries from ex- or soon to be ex-service personnel. The poorly timed nature of the proposal quickly became apparent when those making enquiries realised that existing probation staff were facing redundancies, there were no new jobs and at most only a couple of dozen recruits nationally were needed for the years 1995/6,

a number unlikely to make any impact on the 'peace dividend' following the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, although it was obvious to probation that the Home Office would not achieve its target in the short term, this did not reduce the threat or soften the government's intention.

### **The training debate.**

The papers produced by the profession for the defence of training were largely prepared by individuals following initial group discussions, circulated to and amended by committees and then finally drafted. There were a number of key people involved nationally in the production of these papers. Although the majority were men and most of the key documents cited in this research were produced either by men or by groups led by men, there were also some influential women.

As part of the research I undertook an analysis of contributions to the Probation Journal during the 1980s and 1990s to explore if there had been any change in the sex of authors<sup>4</sup>. Articles by women appeared rarely in either decade, women accounting for only about 10% of contributions with no real change over the past 15 or 20 years. Women were also more likely to be contributing to articles jointly with others or to papers about women offenders or other issues often considered to be 'women's issues' for example domestic violence. Most of the women contributors were either academics or had a joint appointment (part field, part

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<sup>4</sup> ACOP's Journal 'Vista' was not produced until mid 1995 and so patterns were not established during the currency of this research. An initial examination of the first few suggest that the levels of contributions by women appear to be slightly more; nearer 20% of papers are by women. Many more of Vista's papers are by people outside the profession for example there are articles by ex-civil servants and consultants. Whilst women write papers on their own, the (few) joint papers in Vista tend to be written by women.

university). Male contributors, in contrast, primarily wrote alone and came from a wide range of backgrounds including a number from outside the profession. They also covered a wide range of topics. It cannot be said that women's contributions to the discourse have reduced as women do not yet appear to be full participants.

Although women predominate in the profession, men predominate and dominate in the academy and the training debate in the journals, led by academics, reflects this male dominance. Men's more significant contributions to publications is also evident on other topics. In this thesis there is only sufficient space to discuss the training debate. It is however worth noting that, at the same time as probation was discussing training, probation was also engaged in a related debate on 'probation values', a debate that was entirely dominated by male academics (See Nellis, Spencer and Masters in the Howard Journal Vols. 34-36 and a collection of papers on probation values in Williams (B) (1995)). Women, as far as one can tell, were not excluded from these or any other publications nor discouraged from participation. Furthermore, having considered the documents produced by the various interest groups, more of which in the next section, it is by no means evident that the gender of individual writers was relevant to the nature of the publications. The *institutional* nature of the discourse is very apparent and it is the process of creating the discourse through these institutional webs and networks that constitutes its authority. Gendered discourses are produced by gendered institutions. Whilst individuals can create gendered institutional discourses, for them to be institutional, requires acceptance beyond the individual

and there was no evidence in this research to indicate that women wrote differently to men when drafting representative texts.

### *The profession's gender-neutral response*

Prior to the review, probation services, ACOP, NAPO, the universities and others had been advised of the remit. This included consideration of whether the DipSW should be the required qualification, and whether training could be located on the job. The Home Secretary's (and his Junior Minister's) pronouncements on the merits of ex-servicemen had been well publicised so the profession was in little doubt, even during the period of evidence gathering, that there was little room for manoeuvre. Inevitably therefore the 'responses' to the proposals were formulated and delivered as part of the evidence to the review itself, as a form of 'pre-buttal'. This section analyses the joint response to the government's proposals for the training of probation officers and then, in turn, the ACOP, NAPO and individual responses to the proposals after their publication.

### *Pre publication pre-buttals*

The 'Joint Statement' by the Central Probation Council (CPC), the Association of Chief Officers of Probation (ACOP), the Joint Universities Council- Social Work Education Committee (JU-SWEC) and, after printing, the National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO) was produced in 1994 for the Dew's Review and was the first joint product of the various interests working together. Not only was the joint statement sent to the scrutineers as a general probation position statement, it was used as guidance to encourage a unified voice across all the representative agencies and individuals as they worked to promote their case

during the campaign and it was widely disseminated throughout probation. The position adopted by the various organisations at that point was that training should be located in higher education and the DipSW should be retained; that it should be accessible through a variety of routes (distance learning, part-time study etc.); and that it should accredit previous qualifications.

From the outset the organisations jointly emphasised the complex professional nature of the task:

To carry these responsibilities, probation officers need to continue to be:

- clear about their professional role, their organisation's responsibilities and able to express the value base of the probation service in actions
- sound in knowledge of the legislative framework which defines their work and able to contribute to its implementation/development
- confident in the boundaries of their knowledge and responsibilities
- competent to deliver an equitable service to all users in a society characterised by racial, religious, linguistic, ethnic and social diversity
- active and critical learners who can apply theory in practice and who are prepared and able to manage and contribute to change.

These are clearly professional level requirements (CPC, ACOP, JU-SWEC 1994: 2).

These 'principles', on which they stated training should be based, remained central to the different organisations' responses throughout the campaign and although, at this stage, the organisations were keen to keep probation training within the DipSW, there were already signs that they were not putting this at the top of the list of priorities.

The Joint Statement also underlines the need for extended professional training, locating qualifying training on a continuum that includes pre-qualification learning and post-qualifying training/awards. In setting out the principles on which the future training arrangements should be based, probation articulates the features of the elite professions. The principles make reference to the bounded nature of professional activity and knowledge, thereby suggesting a discrete and identifiable cognitive base. The statement also argues that probation interests should be involved in any future criminal justice or associated legislative changes which may impact on the probation role.

Comments about

...active and critical learners (CPC, ACOP, JU-SWEC 1994: 2)

emphasise education over competence. The Statement expects professional training

...to be located in higher education' (Ibid.: 1) and 'to be in a partnership with academic institutions (Ibid.: 2).

Later it emphasises the importance of the service achieving its

...aims and objectives by relevant academic research' (Ibid.: 3).

and the need for training to be located in close

...proximity to a research environment (ibid.: 3).

The Statement outlines the core elements for any training programme and this includes research activities on assessment and evaluation. The elements are wide ranging and, those that require a high level of judgement, for example assessment of risks and needs, assessment of effectiveness and evaluation of programmes, are placed to the fore, suggesting a need for an esoteric knowledge base that can only be achieved through university education rather than technical training on the job.

The Joint Statement unmistakably sets out what the professional associations consider the current and future role of probation officers to be. Already we are seeing a change in emphasis from a social work to a criminal justice and management role. Those elements of the task associated with the previous 'caring' role of probation officers are de-emphasised and subsumed into a more minor role of 'direct work with offenders'. Instead, emphasis is given to the 'assessment and management of risk', 'negotiating', 'managing', 'contracts' and 'evaluation'. The Statement does not directly address the Home Office's desire to

attract more military men. Nor does it mention gender and at this stage the agencies were probably unaware that gender was to become a key issue. The emphasis is on the need for able people who can undertake advanced academic study and the management role. It is through this means that the profession can emphasise the masculine nature of the task whilst excluding from consideration those without academic or management potential i.e. ex-army personnel who have not progressed beyond the lower ranks.

In addition to the formal representation of the joint interests, a workshop was held in Birmingham in March 1994 attended by representatives from all the stakeholder groups – ACOP, NAPO, Central Council, JUCSWEC probation tutors, practice teachers and CCETSW. The Home Office also attended. The ‘output’ of the conferences was a number of messages by way of a submission for the review:

...the work probation officers undertake is very complex and in undertaken in a very complex and changing environment. Therefore a high level of ability and flexibility is required; the most effective way of producing staff who can demonstrate these qualities is through a combination of Higher Education and practice learning opportunities (CCETSW 1994: 2).

It goes on to say:

Some of the competences are complex and achieving them will require sustained study and practice.



More than 40% of the learning needed for preparation for the competences would need to be covered in Higher Education (Ibid.).

The paper does not mention gender but mentions commitment to 'the increased recruitment of black staff' in line with redressing their under representation in both social work and probation. It had been intended that the original meeting point for the workshop would be on the emerging probation competences but these were insufficiently well developed for detailed discussion, hence the transformation into agreeing 'messages' about the review. The concern of those attending reflected the, then, current anxiety about the development of competences and their implications for the role of academia and notions of professionalism. It is in this context that the strong statements about the need for higher education are made rather than a probation specific prescient fear of the Home Office's intentions to remove probation from higher education.

#### *Publication of the Report*

When the Home Office training proposals, along with the Dews Report were published in 1995, the government invited comments from interested individuals and organisations. The profession responded in a number of ways. Formal responses to the Home Office were prepared along with briefing papers for sentencers, local politicians, other organisations and MPs. The two main representative groups, the Association of Chief Officers of Probation and the National Association of Probation Officers responded in different ways according to where they felt they could make most impact but broadly the messages were the same and both tended to stress the complex nature of the task.

### *ACOP'S response*

ACOP opens its response by saying, in outlining the complex nature of the probation task and the need for this to be located in higher education,

this is not a matter of seeking status - it is about ensuring competent supervision of a group of people with many varied behavioural and social problems, some of whom are a risk to others. (ACOP 1995a: 4).

It then goes on to outline how the proposals will not achieve the wider access the government desires and may serve to reinforce the profile of staff the government wished to change as the continued appointment of social workers would be inevitable.

ACOP believes that the Home Office proposals would in fact limit access more than current arrangements. The costs of traineeships means areas would inevitably seek to recruit those who could attain the QPOS<sup>5</sup> in the shortest possible time. Apart from the pressure this exerts on a self validated qualification to lower standards, it particularly favours those who have already experience in the Service and those who are holders of the DipSW - the qualification which would bring applicants nearest to attaining the core competences (Ibid.: 5).

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<sup>5</sup> Qualified Probation Officer Status: the Home Office's suggested title for the proposed qualification.

At the same time ACOP also expresses fear that the proposals would not be attractive to the most academically able, especially as a Masters route would no longer be available and this would, in turn, reduce the quality of staff. In doing so it draws on the Dews Report, which, in this respect, was at odds with the government's view.

The Home Office Review considered it important to continue to offer a route suitably challenging and academically recognised. If the service does not have such an option this group are likely to choose a career which does.... Ironically then the proposals would actually restrict access to the service, and would favour people who were social work trained but who would not have been able to do the probation pathway (Ibid.: 5).

And, later in its response, ACOP expresses anxiety that the lack of external validation will deter potential recruits:

It could lead to variable standards across the country, and a lack of confidence in the guarantee the qualification should offer about the level of performance of those holding it. It would risk making the Service isolated and insular at a time when it must work more closely with others to achieve its objectives. Its lack of external recognition is unlikely to help attract potential recruits. It would have an adverse effect on the future calibre of the leadership of the service (Ibid.: 7).

ACOP makes only a passing reference to the gender issues raised in the Dew's Report and government comments about recruitment. It firstly seeks to challenge some of the Dews Report assumptions and contends that the demographic concerns outlined in the report and by the government are misplaced.

Even with the changes in the age of sponsored students, actual recruits show an enormous variety in terms of age, ethnic origin, previous work and educational background. In the Dews survey of 1993 recruits, 35% were aged 31 to 40, 29% were over 40, and 42% described probation as a second career. A 3-year trend ending with this profile is not sufficient to warrant wholesale changes to the qualifying training system (Ibid.: 4).

In addressing the gender of probation officers, ACOP continues in a somewhat apologetic tone suggesting the number of women recruits is insignificant.

The longer term trend to a *small preponderance* of women trainees reflects general changes in employment patterns (Ibid.: 5) (emphasis mine).

The Dews report indicated that females accounted for 50.5% of main grade probation officer posts. The response suggests that the issue is a minor one and may not be a pattern that is set to continue and ACOP goes on to say, almost as an after thought,

...and is not in any case relevant to suitability for the job (Ibid.: 5).

The response plays down the issue of gender and implies that, as the profile of the profession is, in all other respects other than gender, probably what the government would wish it to be, it is unnecessary to change probation training because of one very unimportant issue. The staff profile shows a wide age range of recruits with a variety of previous careers and educational backgrounds and ACOP endorses the profile of probation officers as appropriate in all respects other than gender.

Whilst barely mentioning gender or women, ACOP does indicate that it is aware of the problems created by the current service image:

ACOP shares the government's quest for a strong, specific probation identity, and is therefore willing to discuss with the Home Office ways in which both its and the government's requirements might be met, while maintaining, or preferably enhancing, current standards of qualifying training...neither ACOP nor the Home Office can have any interest in proposals which would seek to *change the image of the Service* at the expense of creating an incompetent organisation (Ibid.:11) (emphasis mine).

ACOP is obliquely acknowledging the government's remasculinization agenda. It is not critical of it (and nor does it challenge it in any other publications or papers), perhaps believing that enhancing the status of probation as a profession distinct from social work, would of itself lead to a gender rebalancing. An

Appendix gives further hints of this, concentrating more on the male roles of public protection than the female role of social work:

It is acknowledged that the term "Social Work" may *cause presentational difficulties* but this should not divert attention away from the fact that Probation Officers need a practical working knowledge of social policy and administration. All this is necessary if proper assessments are to be carried out bearing in mind the need for public protection and the proper assessment of risk (Ibid. Appendix 1: 2) (emphasis mine).

ACOP might have included communication skills or understanding family, peer and community relationships as being important. It chose, however, to underscore social 'policy', an area not particularly associated with women.

The gendered nature of social work was very apparent and the government's blaming of (soft) teachers and social workers for male delinquency had been noted. ACPO states that, under the proposed arrangements, social workers (of which about 80% of new recruits are women) will more quickly achieve competence than recruits with no previous relevant qualifications or experience. ACOP was aware that locating probation training within social work was unlikely to receive much support from within the government or other political parties. Therefore, the thrust of its response is to suggest that the proposals are likely to lead to more rather than fewer social workers and therefore more women being appointed. In other words, it used the risk of more women being appointed as a reason to oppose the government's training proposals.

As the campaign progressed, ACOP became more willing to move away from social work as the desired occupational qualification and the 'bottom line' became the retention of training in higher education. By November 1995 in a briefing note for MPs in which they outline the government's proposals and the effects that this could have on the calibre of probation officers, ACOP says that

If ministers and Parliament decided that a more fundamental change was necessary, the Association would actively support the development and requirement of an alternative higher education, externally validated, professional qualification for all probation officers, such as a Diploma in Probation Studies (ACOP 1995b: 4);

a line that could be supported by NAPO and the universities.

Over the spring and summer of 1995, whilst the Home Office was considering the responses to the proposals, ACOP members were actively briefing sentencers, MPs, local councils and others and developed briefing notes for local purposes. ACOP developed a national briefing note for MPs which was widely used for other groups and interested parties. By this time NAPO had undertaken a survey of the numbers of ex-servicemen probation officers. In the briefing document ACOP makes reference to this particularly noting that 'About 10% of staff have been in the uniformed services'. It indicated that the profession already attracted ex-service men as a second career and ex-servicemen could do well as long as they were well-trained in higher education prior to appointment. By linking the numbers of ex-servicemen with comments about the need for specialist in depth

training to properly assess risk and manage the difficult nature of the group with whom the profession deals, the impression is given that ex-service men, although acceptable, are 'raw' recruits in an occupation that requires considerably more sophistication than could be acquired in the services:

They work with mentally disordered offenders, sexual offenders and contribute to the management of child protection. The consequences of mistakes in these circumstances are often very grave and could include the serious injury or death of a member of the public (ACOP 1995b: 3).

There is no mention here of probation offices working with the bulk of the probation caseload - petty offenders, young offenders or women offenders or other groups that might be viewed as less in need of risk management or, perhaps, more in need of social work. The image is one of working with dangerous offenders but also requiring advanced knowledge to do so.

#### *NAPO's response*

NAPO began its campaign against the proposals from the day they were announced and took a more robust line than either ACOP or CPC. The campaign was also more overtly political appealing to friends in the Labour opposition, rather than appealing to the government itself. Central to NAPO's approach was legal action, a rally and lobby of parliament. Whilst NAPO notes that women outnumber men as probation officers it states



...the number of female probation officers exceeded males for the *first time* in the Probation Service's history (NAPO 1995a: 4) (Emphasis mine).

This suggests, as did ACOP, that the trend is recent and also reversible. Approximately half of NAPO's members are women and NAPO could not be seen to be suggesting that they found the composition of the profession wanting or that they were uneasy about the number of women probation officers.

As part of NAPO's campaign against the government's training proposals it held a Special General Meeting and a Lobby of Parliament with a Rally at Westminster Hall on 20 November 1995 and briefing for members attending the lobby was prepared. The briefing, 'Questions and Answers – Guidance to Lobbyists' gave guidance as to what should be said about the profession and its work in order to make a positive influence on MPs. NAPO gives very unambiguous advice on how to answer any accusations of the service being

...dominated by women and people from ethnic minorities.

It states:

This claim in the training scrutiny is deeply offensive. The probation service has successfully recruited more people from the black community in recent years. In the past it has been criticised for the fact that persons from those communities were underrepresented. The new claim therefore appears to us discriminatory (NAPO 1995b: 2).

This is a robust defence of the numbers of black people employed, accusing the Home Office of being discriminatory and commending the profession for its inclusiveness. It does not offer the same robust defence of the numbers of women and the response, like ACOP's, appears apologetic by comparison.

In recent years the service has attracted more single women, *but* this is partially a consequence of the trainee probation officer pay scales (Ibid.: 2) (emphasis mine).

Illogically, it continues

...in any event the Home Office's own evidence contradicts its findings because over 50% of recent recruits were over 30 and second careerists (Ibid.: 2).

Like ACOP, NAPO stresses that in all respects other than gender, probation recruits are as the government desires. The government does not explicitly state in public documents or in speeches that it wishes to change probation officers from female to male but this would be an inevitable outcome of the proposed training changes and one that appears to have been desired by the government. Neither ACOP nor NAPO accuse the government of sexual discrimination but both reinforce how closely the profile of staff reflects the government's wishes, leaving gender as the only possible point of contention. The profile already meets the government's expressed desire to see a wide age range and a greater variety of backgrounds and even the numbers of ex-service personnel are surprisingly high.

By this stage however it was very evident that those people who were from an ex-services background were all men and pursuing the ex-services route would be a fairly secure way of changing the gendered composition of the work force. Neither the government nor representative organisations explicitly discuss gender, yet it is transparent from the sub texts that this is at the heart of the issue.

Just as ACOP suggests that the removal of training from higher education would lead to more women being appointed, NAPO is suggesting that without improving the pay of trainees, it is inevitable that the number of women in the service will increase, regardless of the training arrangements (NAPO 1995b; 1995c). This reflects the dominant assumptions about men and women's wages and 'bread winning' roles but also gives an appearance of women being employed on a 'make do' basis in the absence of men who cannot afford to undertake training. This response might also suggest that if black people reach high numbers in the probation service, probation too might be apologetic rather than proud and that the current increase is a reflection of both black men and black and white women accepting lower wages than their white male counterparts. NAPO does add, however:

NAPO challenges ministers to produce evidence to show that women and black people are less effective in dealing with offenders than white middle aged men (NAPO 1995b.: 4);

but makes no attempt to argue that the current workforce composition is the most desirable one on the basis that the best people have been employed to undertake the task.

NAPO is also keen to present the service as appropriate for ex-service men and welcoming of them but reinforces the need for training located in higher education, particularly with this group of staff:

All those from such a background [military, police or prison] contacted by NAPO said that their training experience was invaluable. All also said that to jump from the military straight into probation would have been disastrous for them. Plans to recruit more military people without training is (sic) grossly unfair both to the recruits and to the offenders. Both are being set up to fail (Ibid.: 4).

In a vein similar to ACOP there is no challenge to the Home Secretary's desire for ex-military personnel. At no point do the service organisations express a view that the skills learned in the army or the other services may be inappropriate for work with offenders. The assumption that the toughness bred in the army through a 'macho', hard culture may be an appropriate starting point for probation staff as long as they are then skilled to deal with the complexities of the assessment and management of risk and public protection; i.e. it is a suitable career for 'real' men but only training will make them professional.

NAPO makes even less effort than ACOP to protect the social work base of the qualification and when doing so deals with it as a trade union issue affecting the career aspirations of probation officers rather than as a value and philosophical base from which practice is derived. NAPO states that the proposals

...will prescribe the career opportunities available to employees, in particular by restricting the acquisition of those skills needed for work with mentally disordered offenders, with separating families and with child protection issues, *and therefore* severely limit customary and legitimate expectations of career development in probation employment (motion at NAPO Special General Meeting 1995) (emphasis mine).

Like ACOP, NAPO associates training with career enhancement rather than as an opportunity to develop new skill to enhance practice. In addition NAPO supports an extension of employment based routes into probation training, although wanting the qualification to remain validated through higher education mechanisms (NAPO 1995d).

NAPO's formal response to the Home Office is very similar to ACOP's and the inter-organizational (Ad hoc Group of Probation Interests) agreed line; focussing on risk and the need for a well-educated workforce to manage it.

Constructive work with a wide range of problems in a sustained manner requires a high level of intellectual discipline, particularly to avoid inappropriate, unsafe, ill-considered decisions (NAPO 1995 (d): 6).

NAPO goes further than ACOP, however, in specifying the academic activities this involves.

This requires study: reading, demonstrating understanding, discussion and questioning, learning to make and test by hypotheses, learning to assess risk and understanding moral considerations (Ibid.).

Clearly NAPO is envisaging a highly demanding and scientific 'testing hypotheses' approach to learning the trade and underscores this by reiterating

These are only achieved through higher education (Ibid.).

In contrast to ACOP and other commentators, rather than suggesting that the proposed training arrangements will result in more women being appointed, NAPO suggests that there is a risk of men, more closely resembling prison officers, being appointed. In arguing that this would be ill advised, it must be remembered that NAPO's response coincided almost precisely with the Whitemoor high security prison escapes and a series of other crises that beset the prison service at about this time.

The prison service is a good example of staff with a minimum of training having to cope with a difficult and highly manipulative client group. It frequently fails to do so, with increasing risk to the public and loss of their confidence.

Such a confrontational response, deliberately setting out to highlight Michael Howard's well publicised problems would not have found favour with the government but might have been influential with others outside government and also the civil servants dealing with the prison crisis, one they might not wish to repeat.

### *Individual views*

The Dews review began in February 1994 and the final arrangements for the future of probation training were announced in October 2 1995. During 1994 and 1995 there were four articles on probation training in the Probation journal and a further article in April 1996 which was received for submission before November 1995 i.e. before the decision on training was acted upon. In addition there were three letters on the subject in response to articles by others, one of which was written by an earlier writer. The letters were long 'semi-articles' taking the debate further rather than short responses might. In all, there were nine different writers, all male. Three were probation practitioners, one a criminal justice social worker working in Scotland and six were social work academics (writing in pairs).<sup>6</sup> In the previous chapter I mentioned a further five papers written by four authors in other journals or books. One of the four is a contributor in this section. All are men.

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<sup>6</sup> The first edition of Vista (ACOP's journal) was not produced until the Spring of 1995 and the training of probation officers was not addressed in the journal until after the Home Secretary announced his decision about its future. The debate about training, therefore, was conducted in the Probation Journal.

The social work academics and the social worker spoke for the retention of probation training in social work education although one stated

...this is not a self-interested perspective from higher education...(and) the provider perspective has been little heard in debates (Social work academics (1); Ward and Spencer 1994: 95).

One probation officer argued for social work methods but training to be controlled by NAPO and the remaining 2 probation officers argued for a specific probation rather than social work identity.

Like both ACOP and NAPO, none of those writing mentioned gender. From the articles and correspondence it is evident that probation was already in the process of changing. Most of those writing reflected on the emerging agendas but almost all viewed probation as directionless, unfocussed and uncertain about its purpose. Probation officers commended specific probation training and were clearer in articulating what probation meant to them and what might be the underpinning theories for future professional education. As probation officers they might have a stronger interest in forging a new identity when the need to do so was inevitable whilst those employed in social work education or social work services were more concerned about the demise of probation social work.

The correspondents acknowledge that probation has already moved away from social work in practice if not in the location of its training:



...the Government's decision to pull the probation service out of social work education, while it may have come as a shock to some, it is not really a bolt from the blue. It reflects the reality of much contemporary social work practice (Social work academics (2); Miller and Buchanan 1995; 196).

...the probation Service having been the only body within the criminal justice system which engaged in social working is now the only one whose aim is to punish (Probation officer (1); Toms 1996: 54).

...it is now firmly placed in the context of public protection and the prevention of offending. Interestingly concepts such as risk assessment and community safety were not mentioned by Miller and Buchanan, yet they are clearly part of the contemporary probation task and represent two of the main signposts marking the distancing of probation from social work (Probation officer (2); Lissner 1996: 52).

Miller and Buchanan claim that the place for probation in social work is justified on the basis that

...one of its essential tasks is to interpret and represent the views of people who feel alienated and disaffected, and understandably so, given the inequalities in current social and economic conditions (Social work academics (2); Miller and Buchanan 1995; 198).

They are troubled that probation has lost its (traditional) values and attitudes and note that strong leadership

...partly depends upon a clear ethos and rationale for professional practice but this has not been evident recently (Ibid.).

Whilst they acknowledge that probation has already entered some other occupational sphere, they say that it is because probation has not shown strong leadership in the expression of social work values:

...that a person's situation is not only the result of choice, but a product of social conditions and constraints which are not within an individual's influence of control (Ibid.).

Put another way, although arguing that probation *should* be social work (and as social work educators this would not be surprising), they suggest that the cause is already lost. This too is not surprising given the tone of some of the earlier articles on training even before Vivienne Dews had commenced her work. Clarke, for example, a probation practice teacher, notes:

If probation officers are to be more than just mundane functionaries within the criminal justice system... then they need a sophisticated understanding of criminological and penological issues which is simply not possible to acquire during the 35% to 40% of a DipSW course currently devoted to 'probation relevant issues (Probation officer (3) Clarke 1994:154).

In responding to Miller and Buchanan, Lisser, another probation officer, tells us that the service is currently in crisis because it has failed to move sufficiently far from its social work roots.

I would argue to the contrary by maintaining that the Service is in crisis because it is attempting to hang onto a social work identity in a way which is becoming increasingly anachronistic. By this anachronism I mean that the probation task has changed so fundamentally in recent years that we can no longer call ourselves a social work agency (Probation officer (2); Lisser 1996: 52).

Also in response to the same Miller and Buchanan article, the Probation Journal published a letter from a probation officer which argued for the retention of social work methods as those appropriate to probation and (more curiously):

No person should be employed by the Probation Service unless they are trained to standards specified by NAPO.

Perhaps in the hope that if the professional association controlled training, then probation would be a 'true' profession and the letter makes a strong request for a professionalizing project

Part of the reason for this (the proposals) has been our own inertia and cowardice in allowing changes to be made without reference to us

and

Because we have not established what we are, what we are prepared to become and what is right, we are, at the mercy of less scrupulous but more clear sighted bodies like the Home Office (Probation officer (1); 1996: 54/55).

Probation's failure to stake out a professional identity and police its boundaries is cited as the reason for its current difficulties rather than the profile of recruits.

All the commentators, whether in support of social work training or not, make a case for a strong reprofessionalizing project.

It follows that if we are clear about our professional purpose, we should be able to express our professional identity in terms of the values, methodology and theory which it is necessary to adopt in pursuit of this purpose (Probation officer (2); Lissner 1996: 52).

...the reality is that probation officers need a knowledge and value base...To entrust such tasks to a person who has not been advantaged by a programme of education and training which explores, within a moral, ethical and theoretical framework, the requirements and complexities of practice, and the imperatives and dilemmas of anti-oppressive practice, is to encourage a technical and mechanical approach to the task of probation officers which is foolhardy and doomed to fail (Social work academics (1); Ward and Spencer 1994: 97).

Or,

Certainly, probation officers need to have the intellectual resources that can only be provided by higher education. After all, they have a central and crucial role in decision making within the criminal justice system as regards the liberty and supervision of large numbers of deviant, anti-social and potentially dangerous members of society. This requires probation officers to have the credibility and professional status of other major players in the system (solicitors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and so on) (Probation Officer (3); Clarke 1994: 63);

later, adding:

They need to be highly trained criminal justice workers, not generic social workers who have done a 'probation option' (Ibid.),

implying some superiority to those who are, merely, social work trained. Additionally the mention of solicitors, psychologists and psychiatrists with social workers last implies linkages with the 'full' professions and the need to be seen as 'fully' professional.

One paper contrasts probation with female professions. In much the same way that the ACOP response suggested to the Home Office that the proposals would lead to more women being recruited, it implies that probation will be viewed as 'lesser' than other *female* professions if training is not located in higher education.

It is surprising that, as other occupations (for example, nurses, occupational therapists and others in health services look towards higher education to develop critical, reflective and skilled professions, we are being urged to move in the opposite direction (Social work academics (1); Ward and Spencer 1994: 97/98).

Those who advocated a specific probation cognitive base and the development of new areas of practice unrelated to social work, appeared to be closer in their thinking to mainstream concerns (as evidenced in the discourse) than those who sought the retention of the DipSW. There is little support for the retention of social work as the cognitive base expressed by any commentators other than those teaching on social work courses or practicing social workers. Moreover, the rest of the articles in the Probation Journal at the time were about the new probation, as distinct from social work, practice agenda. For example, in the edition (April 1996) which had the greatest coverage of the training debate (three contributions), the other topics were risk assessment, reconviction predictors, professional software, working with victims, suspended sentences and working with drug misusers. Even at this stage in the debate the new probation agenda attended to victims, challenging offending, risk assessment and management. It was also more scientific and technical than social or caring in its orientation with an emphasis on metrics, and information technology.

There are indications that the probation agenda was changing in a number of areas and probation officers were building on these new agendas in an effort to put

'clear blue water' between probation and social work. In doing so they made artificial distinctions.

...probation officers are not the only social work professionals who work with 'anti-social, deprived, violent alienated, and demoralised members of society' – so do social workers in all areas of social work practice (Social work academics (1) Ward and Spencer 1994: 249).

Social workers were also concerned about risk assessment, working with drug misusers, professional software and victims and

...we are a little surprised that his 'Rough Curriculum' includes much of what is already taught.... No doubt the curriculum which he outlines would be found on most DipSW courses (Ibid.).

There is some evidence to support this view. Not only was probation satisfied that the new DipSW met its needs but there were complaints by social workers that the demands made by probation in the redesign of the DipSW had led to all aspects of the DipSW reflecting, too closely, the interests of probation (Marsh and Triseliotis 1996). However, it was also very evident that links with social work were damaging for probation and, regardless of how well the DipSW curriculum met the needs of new probation officers, it was tarnished with its 'soft' associations. Perhaps inevitably then, probation officers distanced themselves from social work.

### **Invisible women**

The removal of the requirement to hold a DipSW as the pre-entry qualification came into force in December 1995. From then until September 1998 the profession was without a qualification although the agreement to reintroduce one was made in 1997. Agreement was reached between ACOP, CPC and NAPO to appoint only those with a DipSW until new arrangements were put in place. Although services continued to appoint social workers and made no effort to recruit staff from the armed forces either as trainee probation officers or as unqualified probation service officers, the recruitment literature began to change and reflect the government's desire to appoint more men.

Within a month of the legislation coming into force The Guardian in their Saturday Careers section ran an article on probation entitled "Wanted - a new office class" (27/1/96). The article suggested that probation might be an attractive career for both ex-military and also ex-private sector applicants. ACOP was involved in the provision of information to the newspaper and provided access to probation officers to talk about their work and backgrounds. The choice of staff put forward to represent the probation profession is striking. The ACOP spokesperson is a man, the head of probation training at a university is a man and all three probation officers who are quoted are men. This image of a male profession is totally different to the profile of the profession as a whole, particularly at main grade level. It is interesting that no women are put forward and, given the title of the piece, "Wanted - a new office class", it may have been structured to appear to be attractive to men and unattractive to women. The only reference to a woman probation officer is in advising the reader that one had been



the victim of an attempted strangulation by an offender, noting that she was saved by (male) prison officers. The article also states that she 'has a social work diploma, but that leaves open the question of what possible training could have deterred her attacker?', suggesting perhaps that a DipSW was unlikely to be it. The inclusion of a woman probation officer, only as a victim, with the implicit implication that her social work qualification had ill equipped her to deal with the task, further emphasises the desirability of a masculine presence in the profession.

Prior to the changes in probation officer training, local probation services had always recruited their own staff whilst access to training was conducted through a national clearinghouse (CCETSW). Under both the old and new arrangements information about probation as a career is generally acquired either through local services or from the Home Office. As part of the information provided for prospective trainees, the service and the Home Office, jointly, produce a booklet about probation. The booklet outlines the various probation tasks and roles, the skills and characteristics required and how to gain access. The earlier and post Dews booklets are 25 and 35 pages long respectively and demonstrate the various tasks through case studies, pictures and discussion with officers and offenders. There are pictures of probation staff 'at work' and of offenders being supervised. The booklets reflect the interests of the government, the employers and the profession. Although the Home Office co-ordinates the production of the booklet and has a view about what it should contain, the selection of staff and the views they represent are within the control of ACOP or contributing services. How the probation task is presented or how the probation officer is presented is very much within the profession's influence, if not entirely within its control.

The before and after Dews Report (1995) booklets contrast sharply in terms of how the probation officer is presented to potential recruits and members of the public and it is most noticeable in the gender balance demonstrated in the literature. The booklet "Facing up to crime" which covered the recruitment for the early 1990s is very different to "Working to reduce crime and protect the public" which was produced for the later part of the 1990s<sup>7</sup>.

"Facing up to crime" appears as a culmination of all the work undertaken by the probation profession in the 1980s to improve the opportunities for black and white women and black men. In the booklet the CPO is a woman and the numbers of men and women representing the profession are fairly equal except at ACPO level where only men are represented. Additionally there are two black men, both in management positions. This was not an accurate portrayal of the profession at the time. There were few black managers and only one at ACPO level nationally. There were also few female chief officers and, at the time of publication, less than 50% of probation officers were female. It is 'aspirational' in its presentation, presenting as an inclusive service which was likely to appeal to women and to black men as well as white men. Some images represent a traditional, view of men and women. For example, there is a picture of a male senior probation officer at a table with a full 'in-tray' writing, whilst four female probation officers are sitting on 'easy' chairs 'chatting' in his office and in another picture the court probation officer is male as too are the other professionals giving a strong appearance of masculine authority.

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<sup>7</sup> Neither booklet is dated and staff at the Home Office were unable to advise me of the dates of publication. I estimate that 'Facing up to Crime' was published in 1993 and 'Working to Reduce Crime and Protect the Public' was published in 1997.

Nonetheless, overall, there are positive photographic images of women undertaking professional and senior management roles and there is an impression of an overall balance between the sexes with black men included in the service profile.

The later booklet "Working to reduce crime and protecting the public" is very different. There are no black people shown in the pictures. There are two male Chief Probation Officers, one male Deputy Chief Probation Officer and two male Assistant Chief Probation Officers. It is not until Senior Probation Officer level that women are represented in the texts at all. Women are represented at practitioner level in community service in an unqualified capacity and in Family Court Welfare *but not in probation officer roles with offenders*. The female Community Service Officer also reinforces stereotypical views about women not wanting to progress their careers saying

I was probably young enough to go on to further training, But I wasn't interested. I like what I do. I want to continue doing it (Probation Service and Home Office 1993: 10).

Although there are a few pictures of men and women together (presumably probation officers) undertaking training or in team meetings, there are few pictures of women working, the exceptions being a Family Court Welfare Officer and a woman working in a prison (shown with a male prison officer). This recruitment literature gives the impression of an all white, predominantly male probation occupation, dominated by male managers with women primarily

working in roles relating to children's welfare. It also appears that the majority of offenders are male, as are unqualified staff (motor projects, employment projects, community service, partnership working) prison and police officers. The complete eradication of women (and black people) as managers and their minimisation as equal players in the profession is noticeable. Again, this is not an accurate portrayal of the profession's gendered composition, which, by this time, had a much larger female work force at all levels. Rather it reinforces the stereotypical roles of women in organisations, women (and men) as practitioners being managed by men.

In 1993 the booklet notes that

Applicants are not all graduates: some have other professional qualifications, such as nursing or teaching (Probation Service and Home Office 1993: 3).

The later booklet does not outline the previous occupations of probation officers.

Although the later joint booklet does not make gendered references to previous employment, the Guardian recruitment section, in its promotion of probation as a career, does. It gives a strong impression of the profession being one that is particularly welcoming to men. Those interviewed come from occupations associated with men. One joined the service after working in insurance and banking, another after many years selling computers. Both emphasise the importance of the skills learned in previous work, skills such as 'negotiating',

'marketing' and 'presentation skills' and 'meeting targets' and one probation officer states he is

...a *man* of the world, with 20 years experience in business (Guardian 27/1/96) (emphasis mine).

### **Summary and discussion**

The government, in rescinding the requirement for probation officers to have a DipSW prior to practice and, through its desire to toughen up community penalties and ensure more male ex-military service personnel were appointed, was setting an agenda to which the professional organisations had to respond. Previous reports on probation training, most notably that of Coleman in 1989, only five years earlier, did not raise gender as an issue and at that point women represented 43% of the workforce. The 'dominance' of female probation officers noted by the Dews scrutineers was 50.5% i.e. 0.5% more than an equal number of men and women in the service, albeit as part of a rapidly growing trend. Nonetheless it still raises the question of the proportion of men which would have been unremarkable to the scrutineers or the government.

The discussion of the government's proposals was uniform in its avoidance of mentioning women or gender. Whilst not overtly criticising the gender balance of the profession, the professional associations and individuals did not support it. Both NAPO and ACOP stopped short of explicitly apologising for the number of women in the service but the tone was apologetic. Whilst both NAPO and ACOP

state that the sex of the officer should have no bearing on their ability to do the job, there is no suggestion that women might bring particular skills to the profession or the supervision of offenders. At no stage in the debate on training did the representative organisations or individuals suggest that it was a 'good thing' that so many women were employed in probation. Whilst many members of the profession have recognised the links between offending and masculinity there were no public suggestions that such an issue might be tackled by having a greater number of female officers to provide different role models or to 'feminize' male offenders and thereby reduce the incidence of offending. Nor was it suggested that for ninety five percent of its existence the probation profession had been dominated by men and perhaps it might be reasonable for it to be dominated by women for the next few decades.

In responding to the government and in seeking support from other organisations or parliamentarians, the rise in the numbers of women was not a characteristic that was welcomed by any of the organisations or professional representatives; it was simply ignored. The absence of any discussion about the gendered workforce is striking and in direct contrast to comments made about black staff and ex-services personnel. Both groups were mentioned as there was something positive to say about them in promoting the reprofessionalizing project. NAPO (ACOP did not address this issue) transformed the Dews Report's disquiet about the numbers of black *women* into a criticism of black *people* and was able to robustly defend probation's record. Likewise, in the representations made to the Dews scrutineers no mention was made of ex-services personnel although the government had made it plain that increasing the numbers of ex-service personnel

was at the forefront of its thinking. Once it was known that 10% of the probation service's personnel (not necessarily all probation officers) were already from the uniformed services much was made of this. In barely mentioning women and when doing so, in only an apologetic way, the profession is recognising its 'Achilles heel' in the reprofessionalizing project. Far better to ignore a feature that cannot be positively transformed. In a similar way there is no discussion of social work or social work skills. The only skills discussed are those relating to 'risk assessment' and 'management' with the emphasis on high-risk offenders.

Neither NAPO nor ACOP criticised the government for seeking to appoint more military personnel and took great pains to ensure the government knew that this profile of officer was already in place and welcomed. They took the opportunity to build the need for good professional training on the recruitment of such personnel, suggesting they had the personal attributes required but, as the assessment and management of risk was a complex business requiring esoteric knowledge, this aspect would need to be provided through training. Nor did the professional associations challenge the government's gendered assumptions. Skills generally associated with women and associated with social work were backgrounded. Skills such as building relationships, demonstrating empathy and co-operative working were not in evidence whilst skills traditionally associated with men such as confronting or challenging (offending behaviour), analysis and enforcement were frequently mentioned. This is not to suggest that male probation officers necessarily have these skills in greater amounts or that female probation officers are more empathetic and caring than their male colleagues, it is to note that skills traditionally associated with men were emphasised as required



by probation officers of either sex, thereby down playing or down grading those skills most usually associated with women.

The closest any correspondents came to suggesting that the numbers of women in the service was to be welcomed appeared as a satirical piece in the NAPO News suggesting that it was preferable to the gender imbalance the Cabinet demonstrated. The 'open' letter to the Home Secretary noted:

...the first shocker - you may have guessed it- is that 91% of Cabinet ministers are men. 91%! Need we say more?...How can the Cabinet be representative of the wider population? How can you be good at your jobs with such an excess of masculinity?

We can only conclude that this alarming bias in favour of men seriously hampers the Cabinet's performance;

and on race

In our research sample of ministers, not one was from an ethnic minority.

We must point out that this is well below the proportion in the general population.

Or later, in the letter when commenting on the government's apparent concern at the high numbers of unmarried women in the service:



In these enlightened days when marital status can, apparently, have an adverse effect on one's ability to do the job, our research team also examined Cabinet Minister's domestic arrangements. This part of our research took considerably longer than we might have wished, and involved unpacking some convoluted marital histories. Unlike probation officers, who seem positively churlish about getting married, Cabinet Ministers were, in some cases, so enthusiastic about matrimony as to try it two or three times. This had led to occasional indiscretions which in turn led to higher staff turnover at all levels. For this reason, we are unconvinced that single status in any way an impediment to good management practice (Davies and O'Hare 1995: 10).

This lengthy and very amusing letter (written by a man and a woman) to the NAPO News was published in May 1995. It is the only example of any real attempt by members of the profession to shift the grounds of the debate and to suggest that female dominance or a preponderance of single people might be preferable to other possibilities.

The changing depiction of probation officers prior to and after Dews in the recruitment literature is the most overt sign of the profession's involvement in the remasculinization process through discursive means. 'Credible' staff were presented as role models, the majority of whom were white men. Women were presented in less powerful roles and in roles traditionally associated with women i.e. in family court welfare and in unqualified capacities. The recruitment literature suggests a largely male workforce and, in the Guardian article, a totally

male workforce except for single women mentioned only for her status as a victim thereby suggesting the profession is unsuitable for women.

There are no indications that the profession deliberately set out to make women invisible or to concur with the Home Office's statement of the probation problem, but, in seeking to find a means of achieving the profession's goals, the gendered nature of the workforce was played down and rendered invisible. So we see in the discourse an avoidance of any mention of gender, other than to suggest the number of women might increase if the proposals are implemented and a significant reduction in their visibility in the recruitment literature.

## CHAPTER 6: Constructing probation as a masculine activity

So far I have discussed the marginalization and diminution of women in the presentation of the probation profession as the debate on probation training unfolded. The reduction in the visibility of women is only one element to the remasculinization project. Probation wished to resist the *government's* remasculinization agenda because it was a de-professionalizing one involving the recruitment of men from the armed services with the minimum amount of 'on the job' training prior to practice, but it had its own means of masculinizing. This chapter centres on the gendered construction of probation but before moving on to discuss the new masculine probation officer in the discourse, this chapter will firstly address how the profession removed aspects of the task that were associated with social work and women, thus clearing the way for a more masculine representation of the profession.

### The texts

The major sources for this chapter are those documents produced by NAPO and ACOP designed to inform the public, sentencers, the government and politicians about probation work and its potential for meeting the needs of the public and government concerns. the topics covered and the material used in the preceding chapter is also relevant to this chapter but will not be duplicated here.

In 1987 NAPO published 'Supervision in the Community: Probation Working'. This was produced shortly before the government's Green Paper 'Punishment Custody and the Community' (Home Office 1988), when the climate against

offenders was becoming increasingly punitive but there was also a strong counter view of a need to decarcerate offenders as the rising prison population was (then) an issue of considerable concern (Home Office 1988). Government ministers had yet to start criticising probation officers or their work. The second document 'Probation: A Service for the Future' was produced in 1997 when probation had been under pressure for some time, the social work qualification had been removed but its replacement had not been developed and a new Labour government was not yet elected. ACOP's materials comprise a series of booklets/leaflets with accompanying post cards (produced in 1999). Prior to 1999, the Association had very little by way of publicity material and so it is not possible to make comparisons with an earlier period<sup>8</sup>. Although these materials were produced after the training issue was resolved, I have included them as they illustrate so well the current construction of the probation task.

### **The disappearance of social work**

In 'Probation Working' (1987) the offender case histories generally start by describing the offender and their social and personal histories:

Roy Shiner is 19 years old and is the youngest of a family of 5. His mother died when he was 8 years old and he was brought up by his sisters. (NAPO 1987: 4).

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<sup>8</sup> The first publicly available publication by ACOP was Probation Services and the Victims of Crime, produced in 1995 following the implementation of the Victim's Charter. Now that probation has become a national service, it is not clear what role service managers will have in the future in speaking for probation, beyond that which the Home Office delegates.

Norman Curtis is 22 years old and has had long term learning difficulties. He was received into care when he was 11 years old and placed in school for the maladjusted until he was 16. He has a poor relationship with his parents. He is physically overweight and ponderous and is the butt of other people's jokes. He is obsessed with bicycles. (NAPO 1987: 5).

Diana Beal is 27 years old and had been a resident twice as a condition of a probation order. She was abused by both parents and ran away on a number of occasions. Her vision is permanently impaired because of a beating she received from her stepfather. At 10 years old she was received into care. She left care at 18 after a string of petty offences. She was referred to Braley House with multiple debts following a conviction for burglary. (NAPO 1987: 11).

In the case studies the offences are barely mentioned and then only in the context of other social circumstances:

Unfortunately she later became involved in drugs, committed further offences and was remanded in Holloway. (NAPO 1987: 11).

In these cases the social and personal circumstances of the offender are emphasised. The offenders present as being human beings who can be identified through the vicissitudes of their lives, more to be pitied than feared. The descriptions relate to the individual as a whole person and the assumption supporting the texts is that all aspects of the person's life will need attention in

order to address the offending, there is no one 'deviant' element that can be isolated for treatment.

Occasionally offending is given greater prominence but only when the offender has been placed on community service and the supervision is by 'non-professionals'. For example a description of an offender who is on community service starts by saying

Rob Murray is 17 years old. His range of offences include possession of offensive weapons, arson and theft (NAPO 1987: 7).

The professional task in the late 1980s was a social work one involving a holistic approach to the resolution of personal problems, only one of which was offending and, even then, it was not the primary centre of attention.

In contrast, in 1997 when 'Probation: A Service for the Future' was published the emphasis on offending as an isolated pathological element is very much in evidence. In each case the offence provides the opening description

Terry is a 40-year old man who had committed serious offences against children NAPO 1997: 3).

Charlie was in his late 40's when he was jailed for driving offences (NAPO 1997: 3).

Steve is 30 and has several previous convictions (NAPO 1997: 3).

Martin is 30 and has numerous convictions for burglary (NAPO 1997: 8).

Even when the document is describing court work and the attention given to the risk of suicide of those sent to custody, the description of the offender begins:

Michael appeared before the Crown Court on several counts of burglary and was remanded in custody for reports (NAPO 1997: 10).

There is no evidence that the offender group has changed or that their offending is any more prominent in their lives than it was a decade previously. The locus of attention by the probation officer has changed, however, in line with the need to appear to be more focussed on offending, a more masculine characteristic of a person's lifestyle than their family, relationship and even employment patterns.

The only indication that offenders might be more than the sum of their offences occurs when describing a woman offender.

On Christmas Eve last year Caroline a 22 year old single mother received a nine-month prison sentence for a series of cheque frauds (NAPO 1997: 9).

The probation officer's role in this respect remains that of the paternalistic 'loco parentis' for both the woman and her child, a different sort of authority but one

that removes both parental responsibilities and rights and transfers them to a professional.

In describing the cases under supervision in 1997, 'Probation: A Service for the Future' does not totally ignore other non-offending aspects of offenders lives. Occasionally it states, for example,

He had a reasonably successful business which started to fall apart.... By that time he was drinking heavily, his job had gone, his marriage had broken down and there were problems over housing (NAPO 1997: 3).

He has a long history of solvent abuse. As a child he was in care and was abused when he was 10 (NAPO 1997: 4).

He settled, married, but that ran into difficulties (NAPO 1997: 4).

The problems experienced by offender are described in such a way as to encourage a sympathetic response from the reader in terms of the causes of offending as the profession needs the public and others to support a humane and just approach to offenders. However although difficulties are mentioned as precursors to or reasons for offending, the resolution of those problems is rarely mentioned as a target for intervention. In the main, the social issues are put aside and the work centres on the 'diseased' aspect of the offender's life.



The service continues to work with this man in prison using group work to confront his dangerousness (NAPO 1997: 3).

The probation officer worked with him on the causes of his offending (NAPO 1997: 3).

...the focus of his probation work has looked as assessing risk and ensuring that there is regular access to a range of community psychiatric services (NAPO 1997: 4).

The contact was frequent and centred on the reasons for his violence (NAPO 1997: 4).

The case of the young mother mentioned earlier is an exception to this where most of the narrative is about the circumstances of the baby. One other case (the business man mentioned above) also gives considerable emphasis to assistance with the resolution of personal difficulties, rather than directly focussing on offending:

Probation help and support enabled him to find accommodation, attend skills training courses and work on a voluntary basis.... the probation service was able to offer him counselling to help him get over his depression.... Probation allowed this man to take control of his own life, to recognise his anger and use it more constructively and to seek skills and work and avoid reoffending (NAPO 1997: 3).

The heading of the vignette is called 'Rebuilding a Life' and the man was convicted of driving offences, serious enough for him to be imprisoned. The probation officer does not minimise the seriousness of the offending but the role is that of helping the man get his *whole* life back together rather just preventing further offending. This social work approach is however noticeable because it is an isolated example and may be related to a perception of driving offences as 'lesser' crimes - or even not 'real' offences.

Even within the space of a decade the changing discourse is apparent. In 1987 offenders are constructed as a collection of social problems requiring social work intervention. The attention is not on offending but on the whole person with the aim of enhancing their social functioning. By 1997 it is much more offence focussed and offending is presented as individual pathology. The offender may still be portrayed in a sympathetic light if there are special circumstances i.e. is a mother, is very young, has a disability or is convicted of an offence which will not arouse public outrage.

In removing references to those aspects of offender's lives that indicate a social work approach might be the most appropriate, those elements of the probation task that have been associated with women are also removed. By backgrounding the offender's social circumstances, social work and its nature as a feminized task is also backgrounded.

Along with the changing construction of the offender as someone no longer in need of social work, the formal removal of the social work role from the

probation task also takes place. In the earlier NAPO document 'Supervision in the Community: Probation Working' (1987) the probation officer is an enabler, a passive role in which the most work comes from the offender with the probation officer facilitating its occurrence through support and encouragement:

He attended a pre-release course.... He was placed in a hostel...He found a part-time job.... He committed no more offences (NAPO 1987: 4).

After a breach of community service, he was placed on probation.... However he developed once the centre established a bicycle workshop (NAPO 1987: 5).

(She) was remanded in Holloway, and then referred back to the hostel...She is now managing in her own accommodation with a visit to the hostel staff at least every two weeks for support (NAPO 1987: 11).

The role of probation in all the case histories appears minimal and is implicit rather than explicit, suggesting one of support:

At first the placement was very difficult because of his social isolation...He has been encouraged by staff to engage in voluntary work (NAPO 1987: 5).

...he found the hostel supportive and believes that it helped him through his many personal crisis (NAPO 1987: 11).

He referred himself back to his probation officer for further advice (NAPO 1987: 14).

These descriptions suggest a role of 'being there' for offenders, supporting them, befriending them, even nurturing them, particularly in their social relationships. Offenders are not people who need to be actively managed.

In the earlier publication, none of the offenders were constructed as a danger to probation officers and perhaps they were not considered to be. Even those offenders who, a decade later, would most certainly be described as 'high risk' are, in 1987, presented in terms of the achievements they are able to make in their personal lives rather than the demands they make of probation officers:

His range of offences include possession of offensive weapons, arson and theft. He was sentenced to 80 hours community service last year. At first he proved difficult, showing an antipathy towards people with disability. He agreed however to assist on the riding for the disabled project, adjusting well and completed his required hours with no further problems (NAPO 1987: 7).

In 1987 supervision is largely a process of providing offenders with opportunities which may reduce offending. A Group for problem drinkers

...encourages group members to abstain from drinking (NAPO 1987:).  
and young motoring offenders

...are encouraged to attend an motor project which aims to reduce road traffic offences through the provision of structured leisure facilities which offer improved driving skill (NAPO 1987: 7).

The aim of a sex-offending course is to

...encourage acceptance of responsibility for actions, examine the behaviour which led to the offence and ways of avoiding it in the future (NAPO 1987: 7).

The social work role was not considered to be problematic in 1987 although, as noted in Chapter 3, there had been some worries raised in probation quarters about the quality of social work training. There are no indications either that it was viewed as a particularly feminine role although the language of toughness was beginning to emerge in the government's discourse on crime. In 1987 the probation role is constructed as a more gentle role, 'iron fist in the velvet glove', patriarchal authority with the use of caring authority to achieve control (Sennett 1980). It is only as the numbers of women in probation increased, that the caring aspects came to be seen as non-controlling, 'soft' and problematic.

### **Masculinization**

This section reveals how the profession came to valorise a masculine model of professional practice with the professional emphasis shifting from the caring

authority role of the social worker to the controlling authority role of the criminal justice professional. It also exposes how the task of the probation officer was constructed as one that was more appropriate for men. Chapter 3, discussed the use of categories to catch the different expressions of masculinity – knight, hero, scientist, macho man, military man, patriarch and manager and it is these that I use here.

Some of the evidence is placed in one category whilst it might equally apply to another. The different roles are not isolated and there is considerable overlap. Rather than represent the same material, I make references to previously presented material when moving onto the next section. In part the ordering of the evidence under specific headings comes as a result of the way the material best speaks to certain themes. Material from NAPO's publications best speaks to the heroic probation officer, the Joint Statement to the managing probation officer, ACOP's publications to the knight whilst the other themes are incorporated in a range of documents. In planning the research process I divided the material by audience rather than producer. It does, however, appear that different producers present differently even if the overall aims are the same.

#### *Probation officer as hero*

Earlier, in Chapter 4 I defined the hero as the probation officer who 'struggled against the odds with unpromising material to achieve the goals of preventing reoffending'. In the 1980s any difficulties probation officers might have experienced in undertaking the task were largely attributed to the reduction in welfare or social assistance given to those living in poverty. If the work was hard

it was because of the context in which the task was being undertaken not because the material with which probation officers were working was difficult.

Increasingly offenders are facing a range of difficulties in relation to housing, social security, alcohol abuse and disintegration of family structure. *The team believes that supervision is becoming more difficult and more intense* (NAPO 1987: 6) (emphasis mine).

During the 1990s the construction of offenders as more high risk, more dangerous and more a risk to those who have to supervise them become apparent. By 1997 Probation officers are more active in managing offenders' behaviour:

...the service continues to work with this man in prison using group work to confront his dangerousness (NAPO 1997: 3).

...the probation contact was almost daily during this difficult period and a recall to custody was avoided (NAPO 1997: 4).

The officer also concentrated on the effect on the victim and on building a positive plan for his life (NAPO 1997: 8).

In 1987 issues of risk, monitoring and control were important only when probation staff had some direct responsibility for the safety of others such as when an offender is residing in a probation hostel. Even then, in the example below, the offending is incidental and there are no links made between robberies

and subsequent breaches of the peace. The probation officer is not worried about any potential for violence and the offences are described as 'minor'.

Eddie Moran is now 20. He joined the hostel in March 1986, after serving a 12-month sentence for robbery. He had two previous custodial sentences for theft and arson. The first few months proved to be very difficult for staff and residents alike. During the last year there have been two minor setbacks involving breaches of the peace which resulted in a period of community service and a small fine (NAPO 1987: 11).

The difficulties Eddie presented to staff and residents in the hostel are not ignored but they are not dwelled upon. There is no suggestion that Eddie needed to be contained or even his offending needed to be addressed, it is assumed that the provision of a caring, stable living environment will, of its own accord, provide a catalyst for change. By 1997 Eddie would be viewed as a high risk offender, both a danger to the public and the hostel staff, an offender who would need high levels of supervision and management, a concentration on his offending and the exercise of control over his activities through direct means.

By 1997 the risk elements are central to the construction of the offender:

Over the last 15 years there has been a sharp increase in the number of persons on probation convicted of serious offences. In 1993, 48% of those under criminal supervision had been convicted of an offence involving



burglary, robbery or another indictable matter, compared to 28% in 1979 (NAPO 1995a: 3).

In 1993, of all persons on criminal supervision 90% were male and 10% were female.

In 1979, however 80% were male and 20% were female. In 1979, nearly 40% of women supervised had no previous convictions. This had fallen to 20% by 1992. For men 20% had no previous convictions in 1979 compared to 9% in 1992 (Ibid.).

Much is made of the supposedly more serious nature of offenders and the reduction in the proportion of women offenders, with the assumption that a higher proportion of women present a less difficult caseload to manage. The year used, 1993, represents the peak year for the numbers of high tariff offenders under supervision by the probation service. The Criminal Justice Act 1991 (implemented in 1992) disallowed consideration of previous convictions as part of the sentencing process but this was short lived and was eventually repealed.

In contrast to 1987, the probation officer is now very active, offenders more passive (at least when supervised if not whilst offending) and work intensity becomes a key feature of contact along with control:

The probation officer worked with him on the causes of his offending and also with his family (NAPO 1997: 3).

Probation was able to find supportive housing and to offer very frequent contact...close supervision is minimising the risk to the public. All the signs are that the risk to the public is being contained (NAPO 1997: 3).

The probation contact was almost daily during this difficult period and a recall to custody was avoided (NAPO 1997: 4).

It was noted that young boys had visited the hostel.... He was immediately referred to the parole board and he was recalled to custody (NAPO 1997: 8).

...the probation officer contacted the local authority social services department, a centre for people with learning difficulties, (his) old special school and his previous adult training centre (NAPO 1997: 10).

With such a client group the work of the probation officer has become a heroic struggle:

Probation contact was intense and involved co-ordinating responses from mental health, social services, housing and other agencies.... the work has been hard and taxing and there is always the possibility of another offence (NAPO 1997: 3).

The work is intense and demanding and aims to minimise the risk to himself, the public, to children and to staff (NAPO 1997: 4).

There was more petty offending, but eventually he was persuaded to start seeing his probation officer on a weekly basis ... His probation officer spent an enormous amount of time encouraging him to sort out his life (NAPO 1997: 4).

The probation officer contacted the local authority social services department, a centre for learning disabilities, Claude's old special school and his previous adult training centre. Together with those bodies a package of support was put together which was directed towards avoiding further offending (NAPO 1997: 10).

Initially, Trevor was truculent and resentful. But he recognised that he would have to co-operate, other wise the probation officer was quickly going to take him back to court (The Probation Service and Home Office 1996: 14).

He was chaotic and it was difficult to pin him down and get some proper work done on his offending. (The Probation Service and Home Office 1996: 17).

He made a poor start with the Order. His drinking led to warnings from his Community Service supervisor and he also arrived late for

appointments...He was threatened with being taken back to court for being in breach of the Order (The Probation Service and Home Office 1996: 17).

The probation officer is constructed as active and interventionist in later publications, especially in terms of protecting the public through recalling offenders to prison or court.

### *Probation officer as manager*

The service management role in probation was reasonably well established by the early 1990s but the 'case manager' role was a role created during the period of the reprofessionalizing project. Up until the 1990s probation officers expected to directly undertake almost all the work with offenders and, for example, NAPO's policy on 'Probation Officer as Case Manager' was not published until 1998. The first signs of the profession's reconstruction of the probation task as one of management rather than social work is in the evidence prepared for the Dews scrutineers. The joint statement states that

Probation officers work with a most difficult and complex caseload, including people suffering a wide range of deprivations and those who threaten public safety. They hold accountability for assessments at sentence, release from custody and during supervision which have major implications for public protection and individual rights; and for assessments with major implications for the future of children in separating families (CPC, ACOP, JU-SWEC 1994: 2).

The probation officer role is established as one that deals with high-risk offenders from whom the public needs protection and for whom strong supervisory roles are needed.

Later, when outlining the core probation tasks, we are advised that these are

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Assessment  | of risk to the public  |
|             | of offender need in relation to reducing offending                         |
|             | of resources/programme availability  |
|             | of the efficiency and effectiveness of planned intervention                |
| Negotiating | with courts  |
| Contracts   | with offenders   |
|             | with victims   |
|             | with potential providers and beneficiaries (e.g. Community service)        |
|             | matching need and resources  |
| Managing    | continuing risk assessment   |
| Contracts   | maintaining motivation and compliance enforcement                          |
|             | evaluating outcomes for court and offenders                                |
|             | providing direct work with offenders (CPC, ACOP, JU-SWEC, NAPO 1994: 3/4). |

The emphasis is on the assessment and management of risk and also the management of contracts and resources. Skills and interests associated with men in the business world are particularly noted – ‘resources’, ‘assessment’,

'negotiating', 'contracts', 'efficiency and effectiveness'. It is only at the end, and in an unspecified capacity, we are assured that there will also be some 'direct work' with offenders. Undoubtedly then, the task for the probation officer is to manage the probation world around the offender, whilst undertaking some but not all the face-to-face work. The description of the role might fit well with that of a prison governor or an operational police superintendent, one that derives from practice knowledge but is no longer practice and one that is clearly not social work.

Both ACOP and NAPO stress the difficult and sometimes dangerous nature of those supervised. In discussing the seriousness and the risks involved in working with offenders, these are constructed as elements to be managed, not a reason to institute tougher sentences.

Probation officers also manage high-risk offenders in the community on community sentences. They supervise ex-prisoners on licence following release from all prison sentences of over twelve months, including life sentence prisoners and conditionally discharged patients from Special Hospitals who have committed the most heinous crimes (ACOP 1995: 3).

Understandably, if the probation task becomes a management rather than a social work task, then the employment of businessmen is more appropriate than social workers and, as noted in the previous chapter, the employment of businessmen has already been emphasised.

In the previous section "Probation officer as hero" there is also evidence of the probation officer as manager. The image is one of a knowledgeable practitioner/manager whose skills are needed to determine the level of intervention and also someone who knows their way around the criminal justice processes and systems, psychiatric systems and various community organisations.

There are a range of individuals and agencies with whom probation officers interact – employers, hostels, housing organisations, social services, other community social resources and mental health professionals alongside those that might be expected – the courts, the Home Office, prisons and police. The probation officer is a skilled 'wheeler-dealer' or 'net worker' in bringing resources to the task of offender supervision rather than providing services directly to the offender. This role of managing the resources around the offender marks the probation officer in an authority role with a manager's autonomous right to intervene, sometimes on behalf of offenders but more frequently to ensure other members of the network are engaged with the probation officer in the public protection role.

### *The knight*

Through the reprofessionalizing project, probation has been instrumental in creating the 'needs' of victims and the services they should receive, creating a new area for professional expertise. (In this thesis I use the term 'victim' rather than 'survivor' as it is the term used by probation services and the criminal justice system.) Probation began to develop work on victim issues in four distinct ways – firstly, through direct work with offenders on victim 'empathy'; secondly, when

advising courts and the parole board about the potential future risk of repeat behaviour; thirdly, taking action to reduce the risk offenders posed through placing controls on their behaviour and fourthly, providing information to victims about the release of prisoners and presenting the view of victims to the courts and parole board in some cases. In carving out a role for themselves in this new work, victims have been constructed as a concern for probation officers and probation officers have arrogated a legitimate role in securing victims' 'protection'.

Most victims of offending are not very helpful to the construction of an image of victim-hood which provides probation officers with a legitimate role. According to successive crime surveys (British Crime Survey, 1983, 1985, 1989, 1992), most offences go unreported because they are considered by those on the receiving end to be too minor - a scratched car or petty theft are examples. Many victims are unknown, large commercial organisations or institutions or the 'general public' who might suffer from vandalism in public places or higher prices/insurance premiums arising from theft. Even when victims are readily identifiable, they are not always perceived as 'deserving'. It is primarily poor people living in high crime areas that suffer most from crimes such as burglary. They may well be viewed as part of the problem and, as crime surveys acknowledge, men are more likely to be victims of violent offending than women. The group most at risk of violent assault is single males under 30, out at night, having consumed alcohol and whose assailants are similar young men. The elderly are least likely to be attacked and incidents of sexual assault are comparatively rare. Yet, reconstructing the victim as innocent and weak has been a key task of the probation discourse.



It is primarily ACOP that has constructed the probation officer in the role of knight; this being achieved through the construction of the victim as vulnerable and weak and, by implication, in need of a rescuer or protector. The ACOP booklets, whilst presenting probation officers as gender free, describes victims in stereotypical ways, indicating weakness and helplessness and, by implication, the need for a very different sort of person, i.e. one that is strong, to protect them. The images are very evocative. The 'Informing Victims' booklet shows a female hand being held in sympathy. The 'Community Safety' image is of an old man peering through a door fastened with a security chain and the 'Sex Offender' image is that of a female child in a posture implying distress. These represent victims as vulnerable members of the community because of age, sex or frailty. There are no images of strong men as victims. There are no black victims and there are no pictures of the child or women's faces. The victims are constructed as, not only vulnerable, but without personalities or inner strength as might be expressed through an appearance of anger. They are presented as dependant on someone else to manage the experience for him or her.

In the booklet 'Stopping violence' ACOP does reassure the public that

Young men were victims in almost half the incidents of violence by strangers and the elderly are infrequent victims.

Although it immediately adds:

although 10% of robberies involved those aged 60 or over (ACOP 1999b: 1).

It also discusses the fears women in particular have of sexual crimes and how this affects their lives:

One third of women are 'very worried' about the risk of rape. Twenty nine percent of women and 15 percent of men feel unsafe on the streets. For a significant number of both men and women these fears prevent them leaving their homes (ACOP 1999b: 1).

In a similar way, another booklet states that

No other crimes arouse so much loathing as sexual crimes, especially those committed against children. The trauma that sexual offending inflicts on its victims is often severe and it is a crime from which the public expects protection (ACOP 1999a: 1).

The booklets focuses on the sort of violence that children, women and elderly people fear most, using these fears to develop the probation officer's public protection role and their authority over the victim experience:

A woman tells the probation officer of her distress at sitting through the trial of the person who murdered her son (ACOP 1999g: 3).

A woman receives abusive calls from her ex-partner in prison (ACOP 1999g: 3).

Although still distressed, the victim's mother felt strongly that she would like to meet the offender...help her come to terms with her loss (ACOP 1999g: 3).

...the child's parents were able to hear Michael's apology (ACOP 1999g: 4).

In these cases women's roles are contained in the expression of feeling or in the passive role such as 'receiving' abusive telephone calls. In contrast, the only man presented is given an active role in the supervision process

...the dead man's brother asked for more information (ACOP 1999g: 3).

In the case of female victims the authority role of the probation officer is expressed through the victim's weakness whilst in respect of the male victim it is expressed as the gatekeeper to information.

When the knight finally 'slays' the aggressor it is dramatic and emotional, stripping the aggressor of his dignity whilst sustaining the probation officer in his glory:

The task was to pierce this so called 'armour plating'.... Staff really had to work at this. And the other day they cracked it: he broke down. It was a turning point for this real macho man. He has now seen how that abuse

destroyed his life. He cried for himself, not in a self-pitying way, but in despair. He was a 44 year old man sobbing his heart out like the 12 year old he had been (Probation Service and the Home Office 1997: 24).

In this vignette the probation officer is almost in a battle for supremacy with the offender, albeit a psychological rather than a physical one, the probation officer, of course, winning. There are no indications that, in this offender's 'despair' or grief for his twelve-year-old self, his probation officer offers him any succour or comfort. One can almost see the probation officer towering over the 'dragon' as his flames are extinguished by his tears.

The only example of men as potential victims (other than one vulnerable old man) relates to car crime. The image created is gender neutral in that there are no pictures of victims and the gender of car owners is not specified. This, of itself, is interesting as the one potential opportunity to present men as victims rather than women, older people or children in stereotypically vulnerable roles, is missed.

### *Macho man*

Prior to the government's expressed desire to increase the numbers of ex-servicemen in probation and to ensure community penalties were tough, probation always maintained that its role was one of both care and control. Whilst probation might have been considered to be more 'macho' than other areas of social work, as it always had more men, it was not a term particularly associated with the service until the 1980s and 1990s when it was identified as a characteristic of its management (Hayles 1988: Collier 1994: Annison 1998).

This research has found very little evidence to suggest that there is a 'macho' man emerging in probation. By macho I mean the overt toughness and control of offenders through physical means. I found only one example of probation officers getting 'tough' and it relates, not only to physical toughness but also, to mental and emotional challenges:

Periods on both probation and community service are physically, mentally and intellectually demanding.... Community supervision projects are picked deliberately so that they challenge the offenders either through worthwhile physical work or by helping vulnerable groups (NAPO 1995b: 4).

Neither NAPO nor ACOP engage with the issue of toughening up probation. NAPO states that 'boot camps' lead only to the

bullying of young offenders,

adding:

It is totally unreasonable to expect probation and prison staff to be unpleasant to offenders 24 hours a day

and that community supervision orders that are too demanding can be

ineffective and counter productive (NAPO 1995b: 5).

Whilst not constructing a 'macho' role for probation officers, there is no suggestion, anywhere, that the provision of care and compassion are the most suitable methods to deal with offenders, or that skills most usually associated with women are those most appropriate for effective practice.

### *Military man*

When NAPO undertook its survey of the number of ex-uniformed personnel in the probation service, NAPO and ACOP were surprised to find the numbers as high as 10%. Yet, the very first probation officers were ex-guards officers and many probation officers who were around in the 1970s remember the profile of probation officers being largely 'ex-colonial servicemen types and clergy men' (interviewee). The perceived lack of ex-service personnel in the 1990s is perhaps some measure of how much the service had changed over the preceding two decades.

In the light of the government's stated intentions to employ more ex-servicemen in probation, this section discusses the profession's construction of the probation task as a military one. In analysing the presentation of the probation task and probation officers, I was searching for military metaphors to imply a particular type of masculinity. Leaving aside the frequent mentions of public protection, which has military connotations, there were surprisingly few other military images and then they are almost all in joint probation/Home Office publications.

We are now right at the heart of criminal justice issues, woven into the process and recognised as a key agency in the *fight* against crime (male CPO, Probation Service and the Home Office 1997: 2) (emphasis mine).

Changing people is a *battle* (male assistant warden, Probation Service and the Home Office 1997: 7) (emphasis mine).

Working with such people *feels like being on the front line*. Trying to enforce orders, create motivation, challenge offending or solve problems, is not easy. Just now it is not easy either being a probation officer or working in the probation service generally (male CPO, Statham 1997: 124) (emphasis mine).

One ACOP booklet notes work being under taken by one probation service in partnership with the armed forces

In conjunction with Army Cadet Force GMPS ran a 10 week course for young offenders who had committed serious offences. It included a weekend of living rough in the countryside and an army assault course. The young offenders had records of arson, burglary and assaults. There was a marked improvement in attitudes during the project. The young people went away with a new respect for the countryside, themselves and, most importantly, other people (ACOP 1999c 3).

The military man is not in evidence to any great degree and the task is presented as being tough in terms of requiring tenacity, resilience and ability to work for a long time without any obvious signs of success, the hero more than the military man. The image promoted is one where violence or physical control would be inappropriate. The quote above implies that probation will work in partnership with the armed forces, giving an impression of them being valued but different, not professional equals determining appropriate intervention methods but as supporting actors in the supervisory task.

#### *Learned or scientific man*

Probation, throughout its history has had an ambivalent attitude towards academia. NAPO had always held that probation training should not be extended beyond two years and neither managers or employers appeared keen on its extension. Whilst NAPO, as a professional association, has always had close links with the universities, the prevention of offending and more noticeably, the diversion of offenders from custody, were considered to be moral or political imperatives rather than instrumental or functional ones. Throughout the early part of the 1990s the 'What Works' debate began in probation and in the mid 1990s there were a number of publications on the subject. In particular a number of edited volumes of papers brought probation evaluation out of the universities and into the mainstream (McGuire 1995; McIvor 1996; May and Vass 1996). What is very evident from the material published in the mid 1990s is that the evaluation of practice and practice built on evidence of what works was a comparatively rare occurrence in probation at the time. The increased technicality of the probation task was not in evidence at the time of this research although the tools (cognitive



behavioural programmes, risk and needs assessment tools and evaluation techniques) were beginning to be imported from the United States and Canada.

The key to understanding probation's argument for locating training in higher education lies in the emphasis on risk assessment and evaluation of practice. Yet, in this section I explore evidence for scientific man and find it lacking. The technique appears to be to imply the need for evidenced based practice and effective work technologies rather than to suggest to the Home Office that these are already in place.

The Joint Statement to the probation scrutineers makes much of the assessment function suggesting that probation officers are *the* profession in the criminal justice system with responsibility for this task.

They hold accountability for assessments at sentence, release from custody and during supervision which have major implications for public protection and individual rights (CPC, ACOP, JU-SWEC, NAPO 1994: 2).

In order to offer continuous protection, the assessment is not seen as a one off event but the statement identifies a need for

Continuing risk assessment (CPC, ACOP, JU-SWEC, NAPO 1994: 4)

As already noted in the preceding chapter, all those representing probation take every opportunity to stress the assessment and management of risk role undertaken by probation. This role is frequently linked with a consequent need for probation officers to be closely aligned with university research functions to inform developments in this field. The profession does not say that skills in risk assessment and the use of scientifically validated tools already exist in the probation officer's repertoire, rather they argue that they should:

All this (properly skilled workforce) is necessary if proper assessments are to be carried out bearing in mind the need for public protection and the proper assessment of risk (ACOP 1995a Appendix 1: 2).

This is reinforced in ACOP's briefing note which repeats:

Probation officers are required to carry out highly skilled assessments, especially of risk, to advise Sentencers in pre-sentence reports for the Magistrates and crown courts, and for the prisons and Parole Board in reports assessing the risk of release of prisoners on temporary licence and parole (ACOP 1995b: 3).

The gap between the construction of the task and current reality is further reinforced by practitioner contributions to the Journal at the time. It would appear that, firstly, the new technologies, whilst available, are not necessarily in place:

To date, much of the detail and discussion of these predictors has been presented in academic journals and has not been readily accessible to probation officers in the field (Webb 1996: 8).

and when they are they are, they are not used consistently:

whilst some staff do appear to be operating some 'indicators of risk', they do not do so systematically (Kemshall 1996: 3).

However, the growth in group work research... has not been accompanied by a similar expansion in the evaluation of one to one<sup>9</sup> supervision (Deering, Thurston and Vanstone 1996: 70).

or staff are ignorant in their use

Probation officers both individually and collectively as teams [should] be able to interpret and respond to changing trends, which may require new skills. Yet there is little sign that skills in generating and interpreting statistics feature as core competences or interest practitioners (Webb 1996:10);

When assessment and evaluation measures are in place, they are not necessarily used well or effectively:

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<sup>9</sup> 'One to one' supervision means one probation officer and one offender meeting together rather than a probation officer working with groups of offenders. One to one supervision was, then, the dominant way of working.

...it would be easy to assume that all risk practice in Probation is in a sorry state (Kemshall 1996:5).

Probation officers and students need to familiarise themselves with the finer details of research which are now informing the evaluation of the service (Webb 1996:11);

but there is room for optimism and a scientific approach can be developed if the resources for doing so are provided (in higher education presumably):

The real task lies not in the development of regulatory systems which have had an ineffective history elsewhere, but in increasing the knowledge base of both managers and officers about risk (Kemshall 1996: 7).

...this piece of experimental research into effectiveness was successfully carried out in a small probation office, with a handful of staff. There seems to be no reason why similar events could not occur regularly in any Service as part of the development of a 'research culture'. With comparatively modest training and administration, the principles of research and evaluation could be widely disseminated (Deering, Thurson and Vanstone 1996: 70).

All those commenting on the parlous state of practice research are academics who may be engaging in their own professionalizing activities to secure the market for this developing area of work. Nonetheless it is a recognisable picture.

Although I had expected to find more evidence of a more scientific approach to probation practice, perhaps these findings are not surprising and are consistent with the construction of probation in its defence of training. Probation's knowledge base was a social work one and, regardless of how esoteric that might be, it was a discredited one in the eyes of the government and one that could not be put forward as relevant for the probation task. To persuade the government of its claims to professional status, a new criminal justice knowledge base was needed. This was not yet formed and awaited the location of probation training in criminal justice rather than social work cognitive fields.

### **Summary and discussion**

In this chapter I have analysed how the profession valorised a masculine model of professional practice and how the emphasis shifted from the caring role of the social worker to the authoritative role of the criminal justice professional. This chapter concentrates on control through the use of authority rather than control through physical means, authority being a key attribute of the professional persona. To develop a masculine professional, offenders and victims as well as probation officers had to be constructed in the discourse in such a way as to legitimise the probation officer's authority and reveal the new probation professional to the public, government and others.

The relationship with victim's organisations changed when the probation service began to see victims as a 'market opportunity' (Haxby 1978). As the victim movement grew and became more articulate, organisations which were not perceived to be victim sympathetic were criticised and those that were seen to be

on the side of the victim came to be more highly regarded. Probation, in an effort to recast its image from that of being on the side of the 'baddies' began to articulate its work with victims and was eventually required to provide services in relation to them, initially taking on the task reluctantly but with increasing enthusiasm as the pay off in credibility accrued.

It may appear that in spotlighting women, children and other vulnerable people as victims, progress has been made in feminizing the probation profession. A number of feminist probation officers have long maintained that the focus on the offender negated the experience of women in cases of sexual offending. However the professionalization of victim services with the concomitant acquisition of traditional male authority over victim's lives and the authority to mediate rather than speak for them in the judicial processes, has significantly enhanced the re-professionalizing project. The probation officer has gained authority in a cause that is viewed by the public, the government and others as worthy, it requires considerable knowledge of offender and victim issues and the processes through which the decisions will be made. Moreover, no longer can organisations, which may be voluntary and largely run by unpaid (female) effort, claim to speak solely for victims. Notably, probation works closely with Victim Support whilst feminist (and vocal) organizations such as Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Centres are less frequently partners. Victims have been absorbed into the masculine domain of profession. This has been achieved through the construction of victims as being vulnerable and unable to act on their own behalf - not because the mechanisms to do so were denied them but because of their inherent

vulnerability and also as a result of their victimisation. As Williams notes there is a danger that:

'victim's issues are co-opted as part of political campaigns for stronger law and order, and offenders are duly treated more harshly, and their rights curtailed, without substantial corresponding benefits for victims' (Williams 2002: 72).

What is so striking is the similarity between the current construction of the victim of offending to that of offenders in their previous incarnation. Up to the late 1970s offenders were constructed as deserving so long as they expressed some remorse and were willing to be 'helped' by a probation officer. They had the experience of their offending and the circumstances of it 'translated' to the court in terms favourable to the offender. At the same time the officer maintained a degree of distance from the offender and the decisions of the court. Offenders were presented largely as victims of circumstance or having personality or social defects rather than as autonomous individuals able to articulate their own views if only given the means to do so. This probation officer role with offenders is now a redundant one but has been transferred to victims. In both cases the recipient of the service is rendered powerless and their voice is heard only through the professional who mediates the experience on their behalf.

The type of control over offenders identified by the government in order to inspire public and political confidence in the criminal justice system included greater levels of supervision, higher levels of control over the day-to-day activities of the offender and more physically demanding punishments. Such control could more

readily be achieved through a custodial environment whether this was total custody in a prison or partial custody through intensive supervision or tagging. Becoming a quasi-custodial occupation was not an option for probation if it wanted to continue as a profession. Tougher measures, whilst gaining credibility with the public and the government and suggesting the right degree of masculine 'toughness', would not enhance professional credibility. Stringent monitoring would not require skills associated with profession nor would it require a great deal of education or training. What is more, 'toughness' would not accord with the values of the staff group and probation officers were resistant to it. Such resistance had already been amply demonstrated when ACOP had previously suggested tougher measures for community supervision in its publication "More Demanding than Prison" (ACOP 1988). The document had to be quickly withdrawn when the content caused uproar, not just with practitioners but also with ACOP members.

Probation's route through this dilemma was to embrace some of the new supervision elements, particularly if undertaken by staff other than probation officers, and to build the assessment and management roles into the probation officer task. Intensive probation, community service and day centre programmes, the high contact tasks, were mainly undertaken by other staff whilst the administration of tagging was undertaken by the private sector.

In the development of the new role for probation officers, offenders were presented very differently than hitherto. In the previous chapter I noted how those skills required to fulfil a social work function were played down and marginalized in the representation of the probation officer. In those cases where



the offender was not dangerous (and the majority of offenders with whom the probation service will come into contact are not), details of the case are either omitted or the offender is presented in such a way as to elicit sympathy and therefore different treatment is acceptable. Presenting some cases that appear to be at the most trivial end of offending and describing or depicting people who might bring forth some compassion does not undermine the controlling function of the probation officer or emasculate him or her. When put alongside those cases that enhance the image of control, they demonstrate a degree of compassion and humanity without which the probation officer might be seen to be no more than a punisher, a role that would not be perceived as requiring professional expertise. Professional skill is still required to determine the deserving and the undeserving and to present both in such a way that will enhance the assessment role.

Sex offenders are constructed as dangerous individuals who, without the probation officer's in depth risk assessment and public protection plans, will unleash their violence on the weakest sections of society. This construction builds on the demonization of sex offenders by the media and the government and in turn, this demonization strengthens the probation officer's role in protecting the public. The polarised creation of men as offenders and women as victims of offending (especially of personal violence) creates a need to control men and 'take care' of women.

The construction of the profession is a complex one. It had to be masculine in order to achieve credibility but could not be associated with non-professional masculinity, i.e. those characteristics that related to control through the provision of physical barriers between offenders and the opportunity to offend as police or

prison officers do. The profession had to acknowledge that incarceration and incapacitation was necessary in order to have a role in assessing for whom such measures might be suitable whilst leaving the implementation of such roles to other non-professional occupations.

The route taken was one that combined professional characteristics with some toughness. The level of importance given to the management of risk implies that being able to cope with difficult high-risk offenders is an essential skill, and one not normally associated with women. 'Challenge' and 'difficulty' are now associated with dealing with violence and risk rather than attempting to resolve intractable social problems. The new probation 'hero' is one who faces up to the *danger* offenders pose rather than their social or personal problems. Petty offenders, who may be persistent and constitute the major part of any probation officer's caseload, are relegated to minor parts in the drama.

In constructing offenders as very different from 'us' (ordinary people) and as lacking particular cognitive skills, probation creates a niche market for corrective or remedial interventions.

It would not have served the probation service's interest, at this time, to endorse theoretical approaches that emphasised offender's essential normality (Rumgay 2003: 44).

This research indicates that, as these new interventions were not in place whilst the reprofessionalizing project was being prosecuted, probation could only argue that they were essential for the probation task rather than they constituted the expertise on which professional status should be awarded.

The probation task has been remasculinized and feminine aspects, particularly those associated with social work, have been removed. Whilst there is some evidence to suggest that the task has some elements of masculine 'toughness', the construction falls short of recreating the probation officer as someone who might physically stand between offenders and potential victims as the Home Office intended. Equally, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that a scientific masculinity is embedded in the probation task although the need for it is clearly constructed.

## **CHAPTER 7: Professions as compromise and concession**

In the preceding two chapters I set out how probation constructed a masculine profession in the training discourse. In this chapter, using the research questions as a framework, I analysis why a female dominated and, largely, pro-feminist profession was at the forefront of developing a masculine profession. This research is about one profession at a particular point in its history, operating under particular circumstances. I do not claim that the findings of this research can be read across to other professions or even those professions that are or are becoming dominated by women. However, in challenging some of the current theories of profession, the analysis opens up opportunities to reconsider how professions are made and sustained and the relevance of gender in their construction.

In Chapter 4 I set out the three main themes of this thesis: the professional project, the role of discourse and the professions and gender. In addressing these themes I sought to explore:

- 1) What probation did, its strategy for professionalization, who was involved and the rules of engagement.
- 2) The range of discourses on which probation drew to promote its case: the discursive space within which it had scope to operate; and the power relationships that constrained and enabled the discursive construction of probation.
- 3) The relationship between gender and profession, either as a trait or resource for professionalization.

In this chapter I return to these themes and questions. Firstly I outline how my findings relate to current theories of the professions and, in particular I focus on how existing knowledge is challenged by these findings. I then consider the role of discourse in the new construction of probation and the constraints under which discourse creation took place. The third section returns again to the literature on professions and gender and the challenge this research poses to those theories. In drawing together the three themes of this thesis, I conclude with a comparison of Wilensky's, largely still unchallenged, rules for project management with those that probation adhered to forty years later.

### **Professional project**

In Chapter 1 I traced the emergence of the professional project as the dominant theory of profession creation. Underpinning the project thesis is an understanding of professions as self-interested entrepreneurial occupations, seeking to transform their knowledge and expertise into economic and social rewards (Larson 1997; Brint 1994 Macdonald 1995). Professional project theories were, just as trait theories before them, based on studies of the elite professions, on the assumption that the theories were transferable across the range of professions, including those dominated by women (Parry and Parry 1976; Larson 1977). They also presuppose that being a profession is a desired state to which occupations will aspire (Freidson 1983; Atkinson 1983).

This analysis of probation's efforts to reprofessionalize unmistakably demonstrates that it engaged in a reprofessionalizing project. It chose to reprofessionalize as a criminal justice profession rather than either promote itself

as a law and order occupation or defending itself as a social work profession. Probation attempted to re-secure the future training of its members in higher education and to retain control over the content of that training through reinventing itself as a new criminal justice profession. Furthermore, these activities were linked to probation's desire to regain lost status during a period of rapid and severe decline in its fortunes, gain public and political support for its future, and to ensure job protection through licensing via a pre-entry qualification.

However, as this thesis contends, it is through the struggles for regaining lost status rather than as an ongoing project for advancement that this reprofessionalizing project is evidenced. At all other periods in its history, probation either took its professionalism for granted or, as in the 1930s and 1970s-1980s, probation officers have been anti-profession, seeing this as a process of secularisation or as an elitist preoccupation. Notably, these anti-profession stances have been taken when the profession was at its most secure - and male dominated.

It is in defending its status as a profession that probation demonstrates the features of a professional project. There are undoubtedly entrepreneurial elements to it. Entrepreneurial skills were needed for its execution and the profession's defence became an opportunity for probation to redefine its cognitive base, to clarify its distinctive contribution and to engage in activities that might result in improved status and rewards, perhaps even beyond those it had achieved prior to the decline. In 'management speak', it might be said that probation was under threat, the threat was reconstructed as a 'challenge' which in turn presented an

'opportunity'. Alternatively, the project might also be viewed as a welcome opportunity by some to reverse the rise in the numbers of women in the profession or slow the progress of equal opportunities.

In the circumstances of a professional project being undertaken as a defensive rather than entrepreneurial strategy, it is likely that it will not be progressed at (to paraphrase Marx) a time of the profession's own choosing. Successful occupations, for example IT workers, that are in high demand and able to secure economic and social rewards may not seek to become professions at those points when they might be best placed to achieve it. The professional project may be apparent only in those periods in an occupation's history when it is under threat. When faced with threats, there may then be a need for a project to protect already acquired economic and social status. Should status decline as occupations feminize, or for other reasons, occupations or professions might also engage in professionalizing activities.

It may be that prior to and during the first half of the twentieth century, there was a direct relationship between the advocacy activities of professional organisations and the status of their members. When trusted by the public and governments they may have had their arguments for longer or a higher level of training more readily accepted (Wrigley and McKevitt 1994). However, the anti-profession movement in the 1960s and 1970s ensured a more sceptical reception to professions' status claims and this continues today. The influence of professional associations has declined over the years and governments appear to be less willing to use them as experts, preferring academics, policy advisors, inspectors

and think tanks (Brint 1994). This was very evident in the probation training debate when the government ignored over 400 representations against their proposals (there were 11 for) on the basis that they came from probation interests or groups sympathetic to probation, many having been influenced by probation's lobbying (Coleman 1995).

Whilst, as far as can be ascertained, there was not a obvious linear relationship between the profession's activities and project outcomes, particularly as they were highly dependent on a change of government, probation maintained a strong but indirect and somewhat unpredictable, influence through discursive means. It is possible that probation, along with a number of other occupations, was influenced by the critical discourse on professions, for example, as developed by Roth (1974) and Wilding (1982), and modified its behaviour accordingly in order to develop new means of influence. Discursive opportunities such as making responses to consultation documents or contributing to media articles on crime or government policies were used to change and shape wider political and criminal justice discourses and thereby influence government and public's views. Continuously stating that training should be located in higher education was unlikely to have been persuasive and would have been viewed as self-interested. However, continuously stating that the role of probation was one of risk assessment and management did offer the opportunity for these tasks to be framed as complex. The press, MPs and others in speaking both for and against probation interests, all described the probation role as one of public protection through risk assessment and management, having been offered no other description. Whilst complexity, of itself, would not have secured the desired training outcomes, it made them



more likely than a simple supervisory and controlling function as put forward by the government.

Central to the understanding of the professions as a privileged entity is the importance of a marketable cognitive base as a resource in the professionalizing process (Larson 1977; Freidson 1988; Brint 1994). Almost all commentators on the professions, both trait and project, assert that the cognitive base is a pre-requirement for professional status. Even Brint, who includes a wider conception of profession than many other commentators, places great emphasis on prior knowledge, if not prior training (Brint 1994). The difference in academic opinion between trait and project theorists, lies in the extent to which the knowledge base and the length of time it takes to acquire it, is necessary for the satisfactory performance of the occupational task or whether its esoteric nature is a contrivance to achieve a more privileged place in the market. Whilst the literature on the professions, particularly the work of Freidson, acknowledges the limited knowledge base on which professional claims are initially made, it still assumes that knowledge or *knowledge claims* are the basis of professional standing. From the evidence available (see Chapter 6), probation made no such knowledge claims.

Probation understood that without university based training, it would not be viewed as a profession. Yet, it also demonstrated that its cognitive base was an *outcome* not a precondition of profession:

the work was begun on developing occupational standards for the sector long before any clarity had emerged about how this might apply to training (Knight 2002).

Probation defended the need for training located in higher education, not on the basis of the knowledge the profession had accumulated through both academic and practical study but on the basis of the knowledge needed for the *anticipated* task. Probation's pre-existing social work knowledge base could not be presented as justification for a university-based entry system as it was discredited in the eyes of the government. This suggests there need not be a credible body of knowledge or level of expertise in its application prior to seeking and being granted jurisdiction over a particular sphere of endeavour as Freidon's study of medicine shows (1988). The earlier exercise of developing the marketable *product* or 'unique selling point' of risk management constructed the area in which professional expertise could later be developed. The product came some time before the expertise and even now the knowledge base is very uncertain. It was the decision to locate training, in the universities, for a task over which the occupation was to have a monopoly, that secured probation again as a profession just as, conversely, it was the removal of training from the universities that constituted deprofessionalization. The location of a pre-entry qualification in a university determines professional status (but not its level) whether or not there is a prior body of knowledge to justify degree or post graduate level content.

The considerable energy that both the Home Office and probation is now expending on developing a body of knowledge on risk management and effective practice is a consequence of the creation of the probation professional who deals

in these matters rather than the reverse (Robinson 2001; Shackleton 2001). Indeed, it might be the case, that without the protection of the state and a space in which to work, relevant knowledge or expertise is unlikely to be developed. Perhaps government's award a monopoly to particular occupations, not because they provide the most effective means of solving a problem, but because it is only when there is a monopoly of provision and the risks of investment in training are reduced, that proper training and skills can be developed and legislated for.

Having secured longer and more advanced training, occupations are then in a position to argue for increased status and rewards. Professions also need courses of study to live up to the status claims they have already made and had accepted. By early 2002 probation was able to assert that it had expertise in cognitive behavioural treatment technologies (Mair 2002; Rungay 2003), a claim that could not be made between 1994 and 1997. A profession and its academics will create the knowledge to undertake the task and the knowledge producers will also recreate the task as they bring forward some types of knowledge and background others. However, the determination of areas for study is not solely within the profession's gift as implied by both project and trait theorists who have argued that knowledge creation and building is undertaken by professions almost independently of consumer or government expectations or demands. It was this independence that Freidson argued distinguished the professional from the salesman (1988) and Larson argued that a profession was an occupation that could 'define the content of its knowledge' (Larson 1977: 48).

If probation texts are treated as representative of probation at the time of their construction then probation too would also appear to be defining the content of its knowledge around a task determined by the profession. However, as this research shows, such texts are not mapping existing entities; they are creating them. Perhaps it has always been thus and sociologists may have been misled into thinking particular traits existed or that professional knowledge actually existed when it was in construction.

The very fact of discussing professional tasks in texts might be indicative of a building project. The intellectual and knowledge building activities of the professions are highly constrained and, although they may appear to be determined by the profession, the government largely determines them when determining the occupation's task. The professions, or at least one profession as demonstrated by probation, contain their expectations within acceptable boundaries. Whilst the new probation academics were instrumental in completing the shift from social work to criminal justice by training future staff in the new discipline, it was only as the task of the probation officer was being constructed as risk assessment and management that academics were developing probation's knowledge in these areas.

In return for being protected by the state as a profession, occupations give up other freedoms, perhaps to make money on the open market, not to transgress on another occupation's territory or to restrict knowledge to only what is required to undertake the limited role professionalization allows. Probation, in creating the criminal justice professional, gave up the social work role which required

addressing the social circumstances of offender's lives and replaced it with addressing offending within the context of those social circumstances. As with other occupations working in the welfare state (Bertilsson 1990), as probation came closer to being re-awarded professional status, the further it was from exercising professional autonomy. Interestingly however, as the new probation develops within the new theoretical and task fields set for it by the government, so it will come to see these as its own. In other words, newer generations of probation officers may come to believe that they or the profession have real autonomy to practice as the profession chooses as the process of professional acculturation incorporates new understandings of probation.

### **Role of probation discourse**

It is through discursive means that the profession created a probation officer and probation task that was acceptable to government, the public and influential others. The role of discourse in creating the patient, pupil or client has been explored in various studies as these constructions are used by professionals to justify the intervention of doctors, teachers or social workers (Foucault 1971; Wilding 1982; Cohen 1985; Carabine 2001). The literature on the professions has also sought to understand the role of professional institutions, through their campaigning and lobbying activities and the relationship between these and successful project implementation (Wilensky 1964; Larson 1977; Freidson 1986). This research brings these together, exploring the discursive construction of profession, in part created through the construction of the offender and undertaken through professional institutions.

*Discursive space, discursive fields and discursive constraints.*

A Foucauldian approach to the analysis of texts suggests that text should be seen, not as representative of reality but part of the reality creation process. This does not mean that texts, at the time of their construction, are 'pure fiction', although some might be. In drawing on previous and current discourses and through the maintenance of discursive parameters, texts can be both creative and reflective. Those texts that successfully construct entities, rather than remaining as only a record of submerged or dissident voices, work by stretching conceptual boundaries and introducing new constructions and possibilities whilst sticking close enough to the old or what is accepted knowledge to be credible. An emerging reality beyond its discursive creation is not far behind the texts. In probation's case we see the creation in texts of the probation officer as risk manager during the mid 1990s and by the early 2000s this role, that barely existed five years earlier, is fully incorporated into training programmes and national standards.

Central to a Foucauldian understanding of discourse is the relationship between knowledge and power networks and the disciplinary nature of the enterprise. Influential texts are created by people with authority to speak on behalf of others, either because they are considered to be experts or because they represent a wider constituency (Hugman 1991). The authority of the texts speaks loudly and dominant power networks influence social norms over time through discursive practices. Foucault maintains that it is the possibility, not the actuality, of being observed that leads people to manage their own surveillance and adhere to these expected norms (1977). In adhering to the discursive rules established by the

powerful players and institutions, probation ceased to publicly display both its femininity and its feminist leanings. It submitted to hegemonic professionalism which excluded these attributes rather than face more draconian measures of control such as the introduction of uniformed personnel or the removal of offender supervision from probation.

Professional discourses create objects:

In other words, they (professions) create both the object of their intervention - the neglectful mother, the wayward teenager, the bad patient... In this model people are seen as having or being problems and the experts having the solutions - the knowledge to solve their problems... (Abbott and Wallace 1990:6).

However, it is not simply a matter of stating that an offender is a particular entity and this being accepted by those who read the texts. For example, in recreating the offender, the mould of the offender as a victim of circumstances, deprivation or oppression had already been broken by the government and others, including some elements of probation. The government and the political thinkers on whom it relied, had already recast offenders as being wilful rather than woeful (Coleman 1995; Wilson and Kelling 1982; Wilson and Herrnstein 1985). This left limited scope for probation to construct offenders in ways that were acceptable to the profession, the government and in line with the prevailing public mood.

The probation task of risk assessment and management is, however, a probation invention created in the limited discursive space available. The Dews Report, the government's consultation paper on training and the government's



pronouncements to the media make no mention of it. All the government's initial responses indicated that they were only interested in probation's anticipated role as punisher and supervisor. It might have remained that way had probation not appropriated the government's concerns about reducing crime and protecting the public. In taking on and developing the risk management role, through public and published discourses, probation created a need for that role. It built on government policies extending post-custody supervision of high risk and sex offenders. Differentiating those cases needing greater levels of supervision or protective plans required an assessment of the risks of reoffending both in terms of likelihood and possible seriousness. The 'need' for a public protector in respect of dangerous offenders in the community became one that the Home Office could not deny, being entirely congruent with the public's mood and other 'law and order' discourses to which the government was a major contributor.

### *Discursive techniques*

In constructing the probation role in such a way as to suggest that it was always as presented in the texts, the texts *appear* to be representative of probation rather than a resource for its creation. Furthermore the texts give no hints as to why they were created, the purpose they serve or the circumstances in which they were created. They speak in a matter of fact, taken for granted way about some aspects of a world that may not yet exist, other than in the texts. Although building on the past, texts also break with the past, incrementally with each new generation of text. In doing so they treat previously but no longer valued characteristics as both non-existent and as though they have never existed. So we see, in probation's case, that the texts cease to mention social work once it is clear



it is not in probation's interests to so. The texts do not indicate what has been given up in order for the new role to appear to be so well established and there are no apologies for the loss or recognition that probation is being reinvented.

Probation used the limited space at its disposal to change the task from social work to that of corrections and social workers to criminal justice professionals. In order to do so probation caught and held onto a number of discursive handles – visible, easily caught themes, slogans or tags on which to hook probation's new creations. These discursive handles included the dominant public sector themes of the 1990s - managerialism, performance culture, economy and efficiency, evidence based practice and 'what works', risk management and personal responsibility (Home Office 1990 (a and b); 1991; 1992; 1994; 1995; 1996). In doing so it used the very themes and agendas that were threatening its position. By speaking the same language as the government and appearing to be arguing for the same policies, it was able to advance its case. Just occasionally probation also utilises punishing 'law and order' discourses. In utilising a number of discourses and finding discursive handles on which to hook its own agenda, probation connects with mainstream government unease across a range of both commercial and public sector interests. The management of risk is now a major preoccupation for governments and businesses (Beck 1992) with the possibility of redress for error through the courts. The victim's lobby has become a powerful movement with considerable influence and is one that is difficult to ignore (Coleman 1995; Williams 2002)

In working within particular discursive fields probation marginalized others as irrelevant to their role. Delivering effective practice required probation officers who were familiar with relevant research, could devise programmes based on the research and could evaluate practice. Thus the training discourse remained closely aligned with higher education and research rather than the competence/NVQ discursive fields which the government favoured. Likewise, through locating probation in the fields of risk assessment and management, probation marginalized the punishment discourse, or made it less relevant to probation, if not to other criminal justice services. The victim discourse offered probation an opportunity to present as being victim focussed and again to divert the training discourse away from punishment and towards effectiveness in the prevention of offending.

In building on other discourses probation was able to construct the risk assessment and management task as complex and technical. No longer was risk related only to the nature of the offence but was linked to 'antecedent behaviours', 'risk factors', 'protective factors', 'predisposing characteristics', 'cognitive deficits', 'motivational factors' and circumstantial 'triggers'. Models and tools were adopted and probation officers pronounced on levels of risk and 'criminogenic needs', arranged 'multi-agency risk management meetings' and delivered 'risk management plans'. In working so closely with the government's unease about crime but in colonising the risk discourse, probation was able to present the skills and knowledge required for the task as esoteric and requiring high levels of intellectual rigour and understanding. Without diminishing the need for the assessment and management of risk, the government was

increasingly less able to articulate probation skills as being solely the delivery of tough punishments and control of offenders. Furthermore, in (finally) accepting that probation was in the business of risk assessment and management and incorporating this role into national standards, it created a monopoly for the new probation task.

Probation, in developing new discursive fields, was building on both older and more recently established discourses whilst adapting and adding to them. In doing so it was also giving credibility to other discourses. By building on the 'what works' and 'risk' discourses, these were strengthened and this in turn gave more power to researchers and academics in the corrections field. Within the last decade a number of probation, criminal or community justice or criminology centres have been developed in the university sector and the number of academics in the field has grown. So too have the number of mathematicians or statisticians that are needed to undertake 'meta-analyses' of research findings and forensic psychologists to develop and undertake the tests needed to categorise offenders according to the treatment methods that will 'work' with them. This sector also has a major investment in the well being and continuance of probation as a treatment or corrections organisation rather than a helping or social work one.

It (information) circulates in a self contained system of knowledge and power where its primary function – as it has been for more than a century – is to allow the system to expand and diversify even further. The whole business of information gathering, diagnosis classification, screening and matching is a classic example of professional interests at work. (Cohen 1985: 184).

In locating the new probation in the fields of effective practice and 'what works', the profession also had to change and give up more favoured notions of how to respond to crime. The 'what works' agenda required shifting from a person centred to a treatment centred approach, a more utilitarian or correctional approach to working with offenders. Other research indicates that many probation officers were deeply sceptical about the correctional enterprise, particularly as it was one that had (Conservative) government support (Annison 1998; Robinson 2001). These voices are not evident in the official discourse and, the muted dissent in the Probation Journal is indicative of the extent to which the profession, during a period of severe threat, publicly maintained and policed its own discourse boundaries.

In spite of some practitioner disquiet, probation, publicly throughout the project, was largely consistent in its approach, pegging out the discursive fields, locating the arguments for the retention of training within higher education and then constructing the probation officer role within this pre-determined territory. Prior to and at the time of the publication of the Dews Report and the training proposals, the government was unambiguous that it wanted probation officers to punish and to enforce orders. The message was simple and located within punishment and law and order discourses. For much of the project probation and the government were engaged publicly in parallel discussions. The government was not initially engaged with discussions about effective practice and how it might be achieved and probation did not discuss punishment or skills associated with it. Although there are indications, as evidenced by statements in the House of Lords (Hansard: 942 (Lords) 5/12/95), that the government was beginning to

engage with the concept of probation as risk manager, the two discourses might have remained largely separate had it not been for the general election which heralded a new government intent on evidence-based practice being the cornerstone of public services and for probation in particular (Cavadino, Crow and Dingnam 1999). It was not until this point the interests of both government and probation began to coincide sufficiently for a common probation discourse to emerge.

### **Professions and gender**

#### *Traits*

A critical examination of probation's texts as acts of creation provides a different story to that provided by both trait and project theorists. It shows that traits - code of ethics, long training and esoteric knowledge - are not necessarily a feature of professions as trait theorists argued (Cogan 1953; Greenwood 1957; Goode 1960), or characteristics developed by professions and then presented in texts as a reason for awarding a privileged place in the market as argued by project theorists (Larson 1977; Wilding 1982; Freidson 1983). Rather, the research shows a professional occupation being created in the texts and then the characteristics of profession, as traditionally defined, following. In other words, the occupation firstly creates, discursively, the role as requiring a person of high (professional) status. The traits associated with professions then follow as consequences or outcomes of the process of successfully persuading the government and others that the occupation should be a profession.

Probation constructed the archetypal professional - masculine, white, educated, middle class, authoritative and 'gentlemanly', with no mention of the prior existence of knowledge or a code of ethics as justification for status. It was the personal qualities and masculine presentation that were foregrounded in the campaign. These characteristics have not previously been considered to be those that equal profession and only become visible when new entrants such as women or black people do not exhibit them. They are otherwise un-remarked upon or taken for granted. So black lawyers have been called as defendants in court and female business people have been asked to make the tea (as I was on my first day as an Assistant Chief Probation Officer), it being assumed, perhaps unconsciously, that they are not professionals.

This study spotlights the criteria the probation profession believed to be important in determining which occupations are granted a monopoly protected by a university-based prior qualification for practice. Had probation been male dominated, it might have constructed or foregrounded other attributes but then such a project might not have been necessary. What is evident from this research is that probation believed the trait of masculinity to be key to its success and that it was more likely to be granted professional training and therefore re-entry into the ranks of the professions if seeming to possess this valued characteristic.

By comparing an occupation's discourse over time we can see the characteristics that are valued at particular points in time and those that are rejected. If the features of an occupation are in creation in the texts then they may not yet exist in day-to-day practice. So, just as probation presented as being primarily occupied

by men when women predominated, other occupations may present as having a set of characteristics precisely at the time when the opposite is most in evidence in reality. An occupation's discourse might therefore tell us as much about what does not yet exist as what does. For example police recruitment posters generally feature a black male, a white male and a white female, yet both black men and black and white women are underrepresented in the police. Similarly, as was noted in the debate on 'modernising' the fire service,

'the annual brochure and mission statement produced by the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority is crammed with photos of smiling females. But the percentage of women employed (on fire crews) currently stands at 1.45' (The Guardian 21/01/03).

Recruitment and other texts are undoubtedly aspirational and show the desired occupational members.

The literature on the professions discusses the development of the professions as a distinct occupational group. Yet the professions are changing and as women have entered them in increasing numbers, the old characteristics of profession are perhaps less important than they were. Whilst up until the late 1970s it was probably feasible for most members of the elite professions to be men and have the full confidence of the public, this is no longer the case. As women sought entry into the professions and women clients sought, for example, to be treated by female doctors or to have female accountants who better understood their life cycle and financial aspirations, professions have had to change their gender profiles. Many male dominated occupations are treated with a degree of suspicion. The police have found professional status elusive and have attempted



to recruit women in order to present as more professional, believing women to be more ethical and skilled in interpersonal relationships (Heidensohn 1992). Civil engineering too, has made specific efforts to recruit women to get away from its 'dirty', i.e. manual, and therefore not professional image (Finneston 1984). Even at the top of the social scale judges have been the subject of considerable ridicule and criticism in recent years and in part this is because their male (and upper class) dominance is considered to render them out of touch with ordinary people.

Yet, it is apparent from this research that probation, to reprofessionalize, needed to masculinise and this might suggest that there is a certain level of masculinity that is needed for professionalization but too much, or the wrong sort, may not be helpful. Presenting in a gendered way is not a simple matter and probation offered a range of masculinities and accorded some types of masculinity more value than others. It did not, for example, present as military or 'macho' but arrogated the qualities of rational/technical masculinity, more brain than brawn. Similarly it emphasised management masculinity, control through systems and interpersonal activities, rather than force.

A rational/technical model of masculinity derives from the physical or 'precise' sciences which have long been dominated by men. Knowledge is gained through dispassionate observation, recording and measuring rather than listening, experiencing or feeling (Fox Keller and Grontkowski 1983; Harding 1991). It is this model of masculinity that distinguishes between the caring nature of nursing and the scientific nature of medicine. Although, as I shall address later, nursing along with other women's professions is now developing a stronger scientific



basis for its activities. The client or patient becomes the site of activity. They are identified by their disease and the major tasks are diagnosis and treatment for specific ills rather than working with individuals to improve all their circumstances as well as the diseased part. This model identifies offenders as possessing one or more pathological characteristics which need to be eradicated or cured.

The construction of the task as a management activity does not fit with traditional expectations of professional practice but the construction of the professional man is greatly enhanced by the inclusion of male roles associated with power, high status and economic rewards. Management is a better fit with these aspirations than the ex-army model proposed by the Home Office. The knight and the hero are two further roles employed in the construction of probation. Neither of these roles is similar to that of the 'macho' man with its working class overtones although both embody high degrees of testosterone and strong masculinity. Chivalry is implied in the knightly role and links clearly with the role of gentleman. Action and endeavour are implied in the heroic role, conforming to traditional male attributes. These more overtly masculine roles do not undermine the scientific or managerial role but add glamour to what might otherwise be a dull occupation. This mix of heroic glamour with a high degree of intellectual difficulty is very evident in a number of male dominated professions, for example, aircraft pilots, the senior ranks of the armed services, medical practitioners in emergency situations or surgery, lawyers in court and so on.

In building on these character constructs, probation discards its associations with social work and femininity. Interpersonal skills or skills associated with women's professions are backgrounded. These skills might include teaching, supporting, counselling, nurturing and motivating. In fact, any skills that suggest direct, sustained, empathetic contact. Probation might have offered a mixed construction combining both feminine and masculine elements and it is the total absence of feminine characteristics that so plainly constructs the new probation officer as male.

Although probation was (just) numerically dominated by women, this research demonstrates that, unlike established women's professions such as teaching and nursing, probation did not seek to promote its professional project on the basis of female gendered skills and attributes. The profession did not behave as though the rise in the number of women was a cause for celebration. It might have reasoned, for example, that women probation officers with social work skills were ideally suited to communicating with victims, particularly child victims. It could have argued that feminizing men so that they did not engage in stereotypically masculine offending behaviour might be achieved more readily by more women officers. They unmistakably undertook their reprofessionalizing activities in ways that have been undertaken by successful male professions. They avoided any particular associations with women, minimising those that already existed and ensured that they did not claim the merits of any traits that might be viewed as being most usually possessed by women. Had femininity been a significant trait of profession, the profession would have been constructed as feminine and it is

the construction of probation according to hegemonic notions of profession that is key to understanding the professionalizing process.

Moreover, in spite of its numerical dominance by women, probation was still, as far as can be ascertained from press coverage, in the minds of the media and the public viewed as a male profession or one that should be masculine. Professions and occupations may be equally constrained in their gender representations by the expectations others have of them and presumptions about gendered roles, particularly in the criminal justice system, (Martin and Jurik 1996; Brown and Heidensohn 2000).

This research would suggest that there have been some changes to the dominant understanding of profession since the work of early trait theorists. We cannot assume that all professionals will be men or that professional standing is dependent on total male domination as Hearn argued as late as the 1980s. However, this research would also indicate that a high degree of masculinity is still required, or thought to be required by those attempting to achieve or retain professional status. After all if 'jobs can be done by women, they will come to be perceived as less difficult' (Burton 1992: 193), and therefore not merit a university education. What is more the desired masculinity still includes 'gentlemanly' elements. The profession's behaviour must involve control through authority not force and a dash of heroism and protecting women and children will not go amiss. Our understanding of these gendered and class constructs - profession, masculinity, gentleman, etc change over time and are not fixed. Whilst it remains highly likely that too much femininity or too many women will result

in failure, it is by no means clear as to what the right gender balance for success. This may vary from profession to profession and over time.

As women came to enter the professions and to dominate some, much energy was spent in seeking explanations, other than gender as to why those professions in which women dominated remained 'semi' professions, the assumption being that in all cases there was something inherently 'lesser' about the professions in which women dominated (Freidson 1970; Etzioni 1969; Jamous and Peloille 1970; Elliott 1972; Johnson 1972; Parry and Parry 1979; Abbott 1981; Rueschemeyer 1983). Probation, as it transgendered from male to female, lost status and, in reprofessionalizing, identified gender as a key attribute of profession. Probation, by its behaviour, understood the importance of the trait of masculinity as an indicator of profession. For those occupations that are already male dominated, gender does not need to be considered in project planning. Not surprisingly, if only the elite male professions are examined, the characteristics of gender do not emerge as a variable. It is only when women dominated professions are included in an analysis that gendered signifiers of profession are evident.

#### *Gendered resources*

Official probation texts were collectively produced, established through committees, working groups and agreed policy processes and there was little room for charismatic leadership or maverick views. Besides, as each interest group could not claim to represent all probation interests, texts and approaches to the project emerged from both internal and external discussions. The texts therefore represented views and positions that could be widely supported. In

creating a probation hegemony, the textual resources were not at the cutting edge of new ideas nor did they demonstrate rigid adherence to the old but showed a gradual movement towards a new probation, building consensus as it developed. It is through this gradualist approach that discourse is created and it becomes so established that it is difficult to see that it was ever any different. Through these means the dominant interests are protected and in the case of the professions the dominant interests are those already in the profession and its most senior or powerful members in particular.

The influential players and institutions in the creation of discourse are wide ranging. Institutions such as the government, and academic and research institutions are dominated by men, particularly in those fields relating to crime and criminal justice. Not only do men dominate them now but also men have always dominated them and it is only very recently that women have been participants and they still remain marginal.

The regendering of probation texts did not happen overnight. The defining moment(s) might be at the point when social work was abandoned and no longer mentioned in the texts as the basis for practice. There is no evidence of a decision by anybody or any group to be a criminal justice occupation and to abandon social work. Yet, probation visibly reconstructed itself as a criminal justice agency, the decision being evidenced through patterns of behaviour and changing discourse rather than formal decision making processes. The location of the probation discourse in the masculine and male dominated field of criminal justice as opposed to the feminine and female dominated field of social work plays a far

greater role in the construction of probation as masculine than the influence of individuals, although the dominance of men in discourse creation cannot be discounted.

Discourses can not be controlled although some players will have more power than others and the most powerful players will be able to significantly influence the discursive rules to which other players will adhere in order to be heard (Foucault 1972). Going discursively 'off piste' is unlikely to be a successful strategy for any occupation seeking to protect itself when under threat, although it might be an option for truly hopeless cases. That probation adhered so securely to the dominant discursive rules might suggest that it was less close to its demise than sometimes implied by its representative (and most powerful) members when arguing for a united front.

Knowing and keeping within the discursive rules is important, in order to exploit them to the full. These rules are not spoken or written down and they are flexible and change over time. Mirroring the discursive practices of powerful groups is an implementation technique, particularly if there is uncertainty about the rules under which the project is being undertaken. Those who are closest to the rule makers are more likely to be able to play to the rules and to speak in the same language as those with the greatest influence and power (Karpik 1990). White upper or middle class men or members of super-ordinated groups are most likely to come closest to sharing an understanding with the influential players. They may also be influential players in parallel spheres. For example, senior members of probation were often on the boards of national voluntary or other public organisations or

had close working relationships with other local chief executives, who were also feeling under pressure from the government. NAPO officers had very close and privileged relationships with a range of powerful organisations, particularly the press. Additionally, in their informal contacts and discussions, high status individuals can more readily explore the rules and nuances of policy and opinion and get an understanding of what will work and what will be problematic, even before they put pen to paper.

If women are further away from power and how it operates discursively, they may be less familiar with powerful discursive techniques, work to the wrong rules and undertake projects in ways that may not achieve their end goals. This research might also indicate that the creation of a credible profession is highly dependent on using the 'right' discourses through which to route status claims. Masculine discourses will be more readily understood and accepted than feminine ones; caring and nurturing discourses may be incomprehensible to powerful male players and be liable to thus fail to be understood as professional.

Although men had a significant influence and brought considerable political resources to the reprofessionalizing project, this research gives no signs that the probation discourse during the period of reprofessionalization would have been differently gendered if women had dominated the representative organisations or had greater access to the discursive rules. There are no indications that women demurred from the reconstruction of probation and, when in representative roles, they were active participants in it. Professions and their state sponsors do not operate in a social vacuum and will reflect the dominant views of society. Allaire



and Firsitotu go further than this to declare that it challenges 'the legitimacy of organizations when their values differ from those of the society that begot them' (Allaire and Firsitotu 1984: 209).

In the public sector this is particularly true where the tasks and the purposes are defined through the polity. The future success of any professionalizing project may also be dependent on the extent to which the occupation is able to access and use dominant social values and interests to promote its cause. These will not remain static. Probation constructed its role as one that was congruent with dominant values and interests. In constructing its task, probation was conforming to societal expectations and in constructing the probation officer as masculine it was doing likewise.

Society's ambivalent attitude towards women in the work place is reflected in government policies and practices. Whilst society as a whole still devalues the contribution of women, governments, in awarding autonomy and monopoly, will be reluctant to confer it on those occupations that are dominated by women, regardless of how impressive their credentials or project management skills might be. Likewise, both male and female probation officers will reflect the views and values of the society of which they are a part. Men in probation were feeling vulnerable following the rise of women in the profession and the growth of equal opportunity policies which they felt disadvantaged them (Collier 1994; Annison 1998). It would not be surprising therefore that if the powerful male players in discourse creation saw the repositioning and reconstitution of probation as an



opportunity to reassert masculine values - or not to challenge the masculine values espoused by the government.

Whilst, throughout this thesis I have found no evidence to suggest a deliberate project of masculinisation, I now wonder if the reprofessionalizing project was a welcome opportunity for some. Probation's previous unease at the end of the 1980s about the quality of social work training, voiced long before the government's decision to remove probation from it, might now be viewed either as a prescient effort to forestall incipient decline or the start of creating social work as a problem for probation. The criticisms made by chief officers about the lack of a criminological emphasis and attention given to the controlling aspects of probation and complaints about too much attention to 'generic social work' might also now be viewed as the foundations for the later remasculinization of probation. Given that women (single mothers, working mothers, teachers and social workers) had been defined by the government as a major reason for rising crime, particularly that of young offenders, it would have taken very brave or powerful women to provide a different narrative to that developed in probation. Perhaps women's silence on the matter of training may be indicative of the difficulties they faced in asserting a different voice during such a hostile period.

Had probation continued to be a 'caring' social work but male dominated profession it is unlikely that the government would have attempted to deprofessionalize it. Firstly it might not have perceived the service as particularly caring if dominated by men, the terms 'men' and 'caring' being so rarely

connected when describing occupations. Secondly, the government might have been more cautious about taking on a male dominated profession.

In this respect gender is clearly a resource for the profession. Male dominated professions might be expected to behave like men, undertaking strong defensive action, whilst it might be assumed that women's professions are not able to defend themselves. Etzioni's influential work, describing nursing, teaching and social work as 'semi-professions' stated that

Women on average are more amenable to administrative control than men.... also less conscious of organizational status and more submissive in this context than men (Etzioni xv: 1969).

This is implying that the government and others have granted less autonomy to women simply because they can. It is by no means obvious that, in spite of all the changes that have taken place in the workplace, that these views have been replaced by more egalitarian ones.

### *Gendered rules*

In Chapter 2 I outlined Wilensky's 'rules' for achieving professional status. This research indicates that probation's journey followed slightly different rules to those he advocated:

**Table 4 Professional project rules**

Wilensky' rules	Findings from this research
'start doing full time the thing that needs doing'	Identify a public or political anxiety and arrogate an area of practice that will solve the problem
'establish a training school'	Simultaneously <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ construct the task as one required by the government as well as desired by the public</li> <li>◦ construct the task as 'professional' i.e. to be undertaken by a well educated, white male and, if possible, appoint them to undertake the task</li> </ul>
'form a professional association'	Persuade the government and others that the occupation is the only one meeting this identified essential need.
'political agitation in order to win the	Undertake the task willingly but plead a

support of law for the protection of job territory and its sustaining code of ethics'	degree of ignorance which can only be ameliorated through professional training – without which the risks to clients and the public will be increased.
'formal code of ethics'	Develop a curriculum to meet promises made and to exclude the unlicensed.

(Adapted and developed from Wilensky 1964: 142-145)

Whilst different, the processes probation followed are so not radically different as to be unrecognisable when compared to those identified by Wilensky. There are indications that probation, along with almost all other professions and theorists, considers particular milestones to be important; most notably the colonization of an area as the occupation's own, the development of knowledge and training at some point in the process and the need for political support. Wilensky, along with almost all other theorists and in contrast to the findings of this research, does not include gender as a significant milestone to be achieved on the road to professionalization.

### *Beneficiaries*

Public sector professions have few levers with which to alter the social profile of recruits and salary levels are generally not within their control. Salary levels

might also be dependent on the profile of recruits. The remasculinization of probation, as a deliberate strategy, is not evidenced by this research although it cannot be excluded. The rebranding of probation officers into a more credible professional was a complex one. In this thesis I do not claim that the profession set out to construct probation as a masculine profession but in constructing it as a credible and needed profession, it removed the discredited feminine elements and strengthened those elements, masculine elements, that would better support its case. Thus, the probation officer created was one that was closer to the masculine than the feminine. This research indicates that an ideology of masculinity is promulgated through the texts. Masculine characteristics are promoted because they are valued. People support and recreate masculinism, just as they have previously supported communism, managerialism, feminism or any other organising principle. They may gain no advantage from doing so, other than not appearing to be in out of step with the dominant ideology.

When probation embarked on the reprofessionalizing project, it was under considerable threat. It is not the subject of this thesis to examine whether the project was successful but it does consider if a credible probation officer was created through discursive means. Without a doubt it was. The newly created probation officer was accepted by the incoming Labour government (arguably with a stronger law and order agenda than its predecessor), the profession (with some dissenters) and other professions with whom probation worked. In one sense then, everybody in probation has benefited to some degree if success is equated with job retention and some degree of occupational status.

The consequences of the construction have, however, also been detrimental. Whilst women in the profession may have benefited from the construction of probation as a masculine task, longer term, women, in or out of the profession have been devalued. Women's influence on the probation task and the equality agenda have been set back at least a decade in the bid for survival.

As male characteristics now dominate the probation task, men, in coming closer to 'looking the part', have benefited most from the reconstruction and judging by some of the fears men have expressed about the perceived dominance of women in the profession (Collier 1994; Annison 1998), this may be welcomed. However, those who were motivated to enter probation at a time when it had a different set of social work characteristics (Cree 1996), may find the new probation officer is a less attractive model and the new task at odds with their personal values and beliefs. Discussions in the letter pages of the Probation Journal in 2002 (Volume 49, nos. 3 and 4) show that this has certainly been the case for some male probation officers, some of whom have left the service. Notably too, their dissent is constructed as them being out of touch (O Keefe 2002).

Masculinist approaches to dealing with troubled boys and men has contributed to the very problems such approaches are seeking to address (Buckely 1988; Buckley and Williams 1991; Newton 1994; Newburn and Stanko 1994 (a)(b); Eadie 2000). Masculine qualities such as aggression can lead to offending whilst tough responses to anti-social behaviour can reinforce masculine power and hard methods of problem solving. Offenders have been presented as primarily male, lean, mean and dangerous, requiring little thought or solicitude for their

circumstances or the events that may have led to their offending. Women offenders, in particular, appear to have lost out as the gender sensitive approaches to reducing offending developed during the 1980s have given way to the cognitive behavioural programmes designed for men which are frequently inappropriate for women (Kendall 2000; Worrall 2002).

Offenders have become objects on which probation officers practice their professional skills. Or, as stated by the H.M. Chief Inspector of Probation 'they constitute the *material* on which the service works. If the probation service can be said to have a product, it is 'changed' or 'controlled' offenders' (Morgan 2003) (emphasis in the original). Whilst, it might be argued that probation's survival could mean more offenders can be satisfactorily supervised in the community rather than prison, the rise in the prison population since 1997 suggests otherwise. There are also indications that probation officers are more readily recommending custody than previously (Home Office 2001).

It is probation's treatment of offenders in the new probation discourse that illustrates the power nexus of professionals. It can be seen that the government was extremely powerful. Probation's space was limited and it had very little power vis-à-vis the government. Nonetheless it had some space in which to promote the project and used this space to create offenders who required probation intervention. Whilst the previous social work construction might have been patronising, the current construction lacks empathy and gives legitimacy to harsh punishments.

## Summary

This analysis of probation's professionalizing activities indicates that the professional project may be a defensive rather than entrepreneurial strategy although the project will have entrepreneurial elements. An occupation's professionalizing activities may be related to threats not opportunities and feminization increases the risk of loss of status.

In this chapter I have discussed the extent to which masculinity is a trait of or resource for the professional project. I have also considered whether it is the embodiment, textual construction or appearance of masculinity which is important. I have reasoned that masculinity is both a trait and a resource for professionalization but the degree of masculinity required for professional status or successful project management is not one that is fixed but one that is dependent on wider gendered social values and these change over time.

Masculinity is not the only desirable personal or social characteristic. Professional status also continues to be derived from the class or 'gentlemanly' status of those entering the occupation. Protecting the class status of a profession's membership is still achieved through licensing following the acquisition of educational credentials which are difficult to achieve. Probation was able to exclude service men by protecting training in higher education, in contrast to gendered exclusion which might only be achieved through presenting probation as unsuitable for women or as an unattractive occupation in which to work. It is through the probation discourse that a probation officer was created who appeared to be well educated, middle class and male - a professional. The



intersection of class and gender in determining professional status is key to understanding the professional project and both have to be finely balanced. Without an appearance of entry by merit, professions will not be awarded a monopoly or a privileged position in the division of labour. If there are insufficient numbers of black people, working class people or women able to gain entry, the occupation will be perceived as discriminatory, unrepresentative, out of touch and therefore 'unprofessional'. Achieving the right balance is therefore key to acquiring and maintaining professional status.

## **Chapter 8: Gender, status and the professions**

In this thesis I set out to explore the relationship between gender and profession through an analysis of one profession's discourse during a particular period in its history. My intention was to examine how probation constructed itself as a credible profession in order to regain lost status and secure future training in higher education. I also sought to explore the relationship between gender and profession in this construction. To do this I addressed three thematic areas - an exploration of current understandings of how professions are created, the construction of probation in the training discourse and the discursive relationship between profession and gender.

I have shown that without examining the making of the professions through a gendered lens, the resultant understanding of profession is incomplete. This research demonstrates the utility of a gendered approach and the contribution it offers to increasing our knowledge of professions – whether dominated by men or women. Further, in examining profession as a gendered entity this research has revealed aspects of profession, not solely related to gender, which have previously been hidden from view. In this concluding chapter I firstly summarise my argument as it has developed in this thesis. I then consider the contribution this study makes to existing knowledge about professions and gender. This is followed by some comments on the utility of discourse analysis and its potential use in examining other attributes, particularly race, in the construction of professions. I finally return to the starting point of the whole research to discuss the growth of my own understanding as the thesis has developed.

### **Summarizing the argument**

My thesis is that profession and masculinity are so closely related that to understand profession requires an understanding of its gendered construction. My starting point is a critique of trait and project theories and the assumption by their proponents that they are universal theories that can be applied equally to both male and female dominated professions.

The literature on the professions plainly shows that men and women's occupations have different histories and status, both being contingent on the social and political circumstances in which professionalizing occurs. Although some academics have attributed differential occupational status to the gender of the incumbents (Hearn 1982; Witz 1994) the majority have not. Even when gender and racial status differentials are acknowledged, these are attributed to the way in which professions dominated by women, insufficiently meet the characteristics of the elite professions. I have reasoned that without an analysis of the relationship between professional status and gender, the trait or resource of masculinity cannot be excluded as important for successful project implementation.

In using probation as a profession for analysis and in tracing its history, I revealed the close links between its status and gender composition. This culminated in the Home Office's decision to deprofessionalize and remasculinize probation at a point when women had risen to just over 50% of the work force. I discussed the government's determination to recruit ex-service men who would be offered on the job training and the profession's response to these plans. Probation rejected

both the government's attempts to remove the prior qualification to practice and its version of appropriate probation masculinity.

However, the research demonstrates that, in its written defence of professional training, probation's professional associations and individuals created a middle class, masculine probation officer. Whilst this eschewed working class notions of masculinity based on physical prowess, strength or toughness, it also removed any associations with social work or femininity, such as caring or nurturing. I contend that, so dominant is a masculine professional hegemony, probation had little choice but to discursively reconstruct probation as a masculine and middle class occupation if it was to succeed in protecting professional training. Yet as this research so clearly shows, there is nothing inevitable about this. In drawing out the alternative constructions that might have been made, I demonstrate that a masculine professional hegemony can be challenged and new constructions developed. Put bluntly, by doing it, it shows it can be done. But these alternative constructions are unlikely to be successful if they do not reflect societal values.

### **Theorizing profession - a new contribution**

It is well over half a century since professions have been theorized as forces for the public good, acting as a buffer against the worst excesses of capitalism or as mediators between the state and its citizens. The view of the earlier functionalists (Carr-Saunders and Wilson 1933; Durkheim 1957) saw the professions as a public-spirited stabilising force in an otherwise turbulent industrial environment. While this may now be considered idealistic and perhaps naive, the cynical view of the professions as merely self-seeking occupations attempting to gain a strong

degree of market control is perhaps also an over-stated assertion for a twenty-first century understanding of profession. While some of the academic literature allows for an interpretation of professionalism as increasing skills for the benefit of clients as well as workers (Abbott and Wallace 1990; Abbott and Meerabeau 1998; Deverell and Sharma 1999), professions have been, for thirty or more years, largely constituted as institutions designed to increase the wealth and jurisdiction of their members through collective action. In line with this, as I noted at the outset, Larson's work (1977) on how this is achieved has not been superseded in any significant way.

Probation may be unique or its particular circumstances extraordinary and unlikely to be repeated but, as discussed in Chapter 2, it is not uncommon for professions dominated by women to have problems with credibility and lack of status. Whilst these findings cannot be assumed to show universal truths about professions or even be read across to any other profession, they challenge our current knowledge about professions. This challenge relates to two major questions. Firstly, is the professional project only in evidence during periods when occupations are under threat? Secondly, is the professional project a masculinization project to protect social and economic status?

#### *The professional project as a defensive project*

This research indicates that, whilst project or power theories may have provided the most useful model for the analysis of *male* professions in the 1970s, some revision may now be necessary. Theorising the professions in the 1960s and 1970s followed their unparalleled growth during the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and

first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. At that time, the growth of the professions appeared inexorable and the merits of this were questioned by academics. The prevailing view was that the male dominated elite professions were over powerful at the expense of their clients and that the newer, female dominated, 'semi' professions were attempting to professionalize in order to acquire the same status and rewards (Wilensky 1964; Johnson 1972; Roth 1974; Wilding, 1982; Mungham and Thomas, 1983; Galanter, 1983).

This research, in challenging the professional project as a planned strategy for increasing social and economic resources, does not challenge claims that professional status and project activities are causally linked. Furthermore, it has not been the place of this research to judge the outcomes of probation's project; historians may make judgements on this in due course. There is, however, nothing in the findings of this research that suggests that probation will not benefit from its project activities, even if they have been pursued reluctantly and as part of a defensive strategy. The challenge this research poses is to the assumption that project activities are undertaken as a conscious planned approach to improving status rather than as a reaction to threats to existing status. This is an important challenge as much public policy has been predicated on the former assumption.

Theorizing all professions as self-seeking organisations intent only on improving their economic and social resources resulted in a critical response to professional claims and provided, for both the left and the right of the political spectrum, reasons for curtailing professional freedoms. The theories not only influenced the

development of management control as a dominant means of organising labour across all types of occupations but they also legitimised government attacks on the professions in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This resulted in curtailing some of the powers of the elite professions; it also contributed to reducing significantly and disproportionately the autonomy and status of professions dominated by women, particularly in the public sector (Coyle 1995; Tinsley and Luck 1998; Brown and McCartney 1999; Perrott 2002). The development of policies or theories about particular groups or organizations that leads directly to discrimination against women or other groups needs to be challenged by those involved in policy processes and by academics. This research provides the material on which such challenges can be based.

Whilst virtually all occupations will have an interest in improving their social and economic position, the traditional traits of profession do not appear to be the bartering currency so often suggested by project theorists. It is the masculine characteristics of successful professions such as specialist, technical knowledge and an emphasis on 'clinical' individual practice, which appear to be their most important resource. Furthermore, emphasising these masculine traits may come at the cost of abandoning previously valued occupational characteristics (as was the case with probation).

Far from professions being autonomous and independent of the state and clients, as project theorists claim, occupations are likely to be granted professional status only if they conform to the dominant understanding of profession. That is, they should not transgress the boundaries set for them by the state and other powerful

interests. To sustain their professionalism they concede their place in the open market or restrict their activities to those required by the government; they cease to advocate, politically, on behalf of clients and subscribe to the government's construction of the problem to be addressed. Whilst the controls on the profession may be exercised by the profession, I contend that this only persists so long as the profession exercises self restraint and adheres to the rules laid down for it and those rules are gendered.

The possibility that professionalization is a defensive strategy, and that the characteristics of profession are concessions made in the process of defence, suggests further lines of enquiry that might be usefully followed in future research. If we revisited, for example, the development of the elite professions would we find that the greatest surges in professionalization occurred in response to threats that they faced? Might it be that most pre-professional occupations began and practised for many years as either 'vocations' with an ideological purpose or as a loose collection of independent practitioners happily selling their services on the open market? Did they only professionalize when under threat? In the case of medicine in America, Freidson noted that

Egalitarianism led to feelings that no man's freedom to heal others should be hampered by medical licensing laws, and the expansion of the frontier precluded the enforcement of any elaborate set of rules about who may heal. On the frontier virtually anyone could practice healing, and many called themselves "doctor". (Freidson 1970: 20).



Those very same arguments are currently being expounded in the case of new technology and the use of the internet, male dominated occupations doing well without needing to professionalize.

Some newer occupations - such as public relations, marketing, IT and communications specialists, currency and stock dealers, journalism and broadcasting - are not universally viewed as professions and appear not to be seeking social or economic advancement through gaining professional status. These occupations have at least the status and the economic rewards of the professions and more so than many. They compete in the market place, are in a period of rapid growth and their future, at least in the short term, looks secure without the benefits and the disadvantages of professional status. They have no need for a code of ethics, long training or any other constraints on their current market position. Because achieving professional status has served some occupations well, that does not mean that it is a route taken through choice or that occupations decide to professionalize in order to gain market advantage. If it did, powerful occupations such as those noted above would be using all their leverage to develop codes of ethics, long training courses and restricted entry. A professional project may therefore be a mark of threatened occupational decline or failure, where threats are turned into occupational advantage. It may be that, as in probation's case, feminization is one such threat.

I cannot discount entirely the traditional assumption that the professional project is a universal strategy for occupational advancement and that probation's professional project is an aberration arising from the unique political

circumstances of the time. However, a superficial glance at other professions dominated by women would suggest otherwise.

*Professionalization as masculinisation – a new theory of the professions?*

This research shows the importance of embodied, discursively created and ideological masculinity in the making of a profession. The more men in a profession, the less need there will be for either discursive or ideological masculinity. However, if current social and demographic trends continue, we can expect to see many of those professions which are currently dominated by men, dominated by women, at least in the practitioner grades. I hypothesise that we will see two developments from this. First, as is evidenced by probation, we will see the ideological masculinisation of professions as they feminize (although there may be a 'honey-moon' period when they are still a minority and some degree of feminism will be permitted). Second, we will see that, as women come closer to meeting the all the traits of profession other than sex, so the traits of profession will change to traits more akin to those in other skilled occupations dominated by men. Whatever 'characteristics' of profession are identified, one constant will remain; amongst those occupations which require high degrees of education, those that are dominated by men will continue to have the most power and influence and the highest status. In other words where men are, so will the power be, whilst women continue to try and 'catch up' by copying valued occupational characteristics.

This research points to a new theory of profession creation as an act of masculinization. A theory which emphasises firstly the masculinisation of current

professions or occupations dominated by women and secondly that status will remain with those occupations dominated by men. Previous research has shown that female professions have tried to attract men to increase status (Scotch 1971; Kravetz 1976; Williams 1995). This research has shown how one profession recreated itself discursively as masculine. Discursive masculinity is also very evident in a number of professions as a means of excluding women (Vicinus 1985; Witz 1993; Martin and Jurik 1996). Through discursive means masculinity is created as an ideology for practice; a practice hegemony not dependent on the gender of those undertaking the task.

For women to succeed in the professions and other valued occupational sectors such as management, they have to become more like men and work to a masculine practice ideology (Spencer and Podmore 1987; Burton 1992; Cassell 1997). Women's organizations including occupations and professions dominated by women have also masculinized. They have 'isomorphed' or, alternatively, have fallen silent as they negotiate and work in 'partnership' with more powerful, masculine players (Newman 2002). Increasingly these women centred organizations are expected to act like men's. In order to gain public funding, they have been required to move away from ideas of equality of pay and status; project directors have appeared in former collectives and more co-operative forms of service delivery have been viewed as 'disorganisation, inefficiency or unprofessionalism' by commissioning or partnership agencies (Mullender and Perrott 1998: 71). Professional, organizational or managerial responsibility has required masculine demeanours - so we see the masculinization of successful occupations rather than the feminization of influence. Professional practice as a

form of hegemonic masculinity, achieved by either sex, may be the final concession in a process of professional conformity.

All of the above implies that whilst the concept and understanding of profession may change, the location of power and status will remain with men. Men's professionalizing projects, particularly in medicine and law coincided with their exclusion of women (Vicinus 1985; Anderson and Zinssner 1988; Rowbotham 1990; Witz 1992). In retrospect, it is no longer surprising that the start of the decline in the status of the professions, and the attacks made by sociologists and then governments on their monopoly, began just as women's professions were beginning to exercise their own professionalizing demands, demands that were roundly dismissed by some academics at the time (Etzioni 1969). It might have been perfectly acceptable for the professions to hold power and influence and have social and economic wealth when dominated by 'gentlemen', but a society which is reluctant to grant women these resources is also unlikely to grant women the means of obtaining them.

The early professions were made up of 'gentlemen' but as more people, particularly women, came to join existing professions or form other professions, the status hierarchy elongated with men dominating the elite sectors (Crompton and Sanderson 1990; Burton 1992; Lindley 1994). As women have moved into the professions – and may yet come to numerically dominate them, men have moved out into new sectors - management, policy development, technology and information sectors (Crompton 1994; EOC 2001). These sectors have become more powerful in policy decision-making processes (Lindley 1994; Brint 1994;

Reed 1996). We no longer consider such occupations as outside the professions (Wilensky 1964) but as central to the new understanding of profession (Brint 1994; Reed 1996).

Meanwhile as women have come closer to achieving points on the hierarchy or particular jobs previously dominated by men so too has the status shifted (Legge 1987; Cockburn 1991; Hamrick 1994; Perrott 2002). Where women dominate professions such as medicine in the (old) Soviet Union or dentistry in Denmark, those professions have a lower standing than in other countries (Epstein 1970). In the UK the standing of pharmacy declined as it feminized even though the high entry qualifications remain the same (Becher 1990) and, as this research has shown, so too did the standing of probation. Coyle also notes that women have gained entry into particular sectors 'only after the pay, conditions and status than men had achieved in those jobs has been eroded' (Coyle 1995: vii). A similar phenomenon has been noted with regard to women's progress in the civil service (Cunningham, Lord and Delaney 1997). Throughout the history of the professions, influence and status has remained steadfastly with men; it is not the characteristics of the occupation or the required skills which are important. Rather, where men go status will follow.

Equality has been interpreted as enabling women to access institutions, previously denied them, initially the professions and more recently management. It is a rights based interpretation of equality. However many women have sought to become professionals (and then managers) in order to influence the way in which civil society works not just to have access to a man's level of income or life style.

If each new generation of women finds the locus of power shifts as they gain access, the goal of influencing how things operate (and progress on equality) will never be realised. It will be a constant game of 'catch up'. Along with 'the professionalization of everyone' (Wilensky 1964: 137), we are seeing the masculinisation of everyone as men do and women follow. Furthermore, it may be that for women to have a feminist influence, they might have to remain as dissident and critical voices. From this examination of probation, it would appear this latter route maybe more effective than incorporation and masculinization.

The theory of professionalization as masculinization would explain the elite professions' historic exclusion of women as they professionalized. It would also explain the current growth of high status masculine occupations which have no need, as yet, to professionalize as there are insufficient women to threaten their status. It also sheds light on the continued low status of women's professions such as teaching and nursing; without sufficient men they are not considered to be professions (Hearn 1982). What Hearn understood intuitively, is supported empirically in this research.

### **Implications for future research**

More work needs to be undertaken in support of the theory of professionalization as masculinisation. The tracking of professional projects of newer occupations through a gendered lens might further distinguish the circumstances in which professionalizing occurs. Likewise in tracking the decline in the professional standing of existing professions and the circumstances in which this occurs, future research might usefully illuminate the relationship between gender composition

and professional status. It is not sufficient, however, to consider the professions in isolation, they need to be understood within a wider social and occupational context. The relationship between masculinity and professional status is unlikely to be absolute; it will vary according to occupational sector and over time. It may be expected, for instance, that criminal justice occupations should exhibit a higher degree of masculinity than health occupations, including medicine. Furthermore, as women increasingly join the professions, the expected proportion of men may also change. If sufficient men move from the professions into their management, women are likely to predominate in the professions. However, I contend that the strong male presence in their management is likely to ensure men's continued domination and control. It is these relationships between gender, influence and status that need further exploration, along with how these relationships create and are created by changing understandings of profession.

### **Implications for practice**

Over the years, feminists have questioned the benefits for women (service users and practitioners) of masculine institutions or ways of doing business: on tackling violence against women (Dobash and Dobash 1992; Foley 1994; Perrott 1994); the legal profession (Smart 1989; Heidensohn 1992); social work (Davis and Brook 1985; Langan and Day 1992); education (Miller 1996); nursing (Davies 1995); research (Stanley (1990; Kent and Palmer 1999); organizations Itzen and Newman 1995) and management (Marshall 1984). More recently, the development of new occupations, such as rape counselling and domestic abuse workers, illustrate women's dissatisfaction with the older professions and organizations dealing with such matters. Ideological masculinization of the



professions and the tasks they undertake may therefore be a disservice to service users - patients, pupils or offenders - as much as it is a disservice to those who are required to make the ideological and practice shift.

Understanding the gendered rules under which occupational advancement is likely to be promoted or retarded is important for thinking through how to tackle occupational discrimination and disadvantage. Promoting inclusive employment practices and family friendly work places benefit individual women (and men). However, if such policies are restricted to particular sectors such as the public sector or social care and consequently women's dominance in those sectors leads to their devaluation, women overall gain little benefit; many will remain in low paid devalued jobs. As employers continue to need more labour, particularly well-educated skilled labour, they will wish to attract women but without necessarily changing the underlying organizational philosophy or power relationships. 'Valuing diversity' in the work place is an instrumental policy if, in order to succeed, new 'diverse' entrants have to assimilate all the values and behaviours of a white masculine organization rather than influencing organizational change. What then needs to be done?

Although the government did not openly acknowledge that gender was at the core of its policy on probation training and although probation interests did not mention gender in their responses, it was clear that all those involved knew that gender was at the heart of the issue. It is essential therefore that when the next profession or occupation that becomes numerically dominated by women is similarly threatened with its demise or loss of status, the nature of the issue is exposed and



the silence is not repeated. In adding to a deeper understanding of the gendered nature of the valued characteristics of profession, this study opens up the possibility of and provides some evidence for such a challenge.

In addition, in exposing the masculine nature of the current construction of a valued professional, it enables policy-makers, occupations and employers to challenge how occupational values are constructed. It provides the opportunity to highlight and challenge the relegation of feminine attributes as being of lesser value than those that are associated with men and to promote both male and female values in the workplace.

### **The utility of discourse analysis and its problems**

In seeking to understand the relationship between gender and profession I have raised a number of challenges to current theories of profession, particularly to the professional project. The previous lack of challenge, over the past thirty years, to the theory of the professional project as an entrepreneurial rather than a defensive strategy is remarkable. For a theory to have offered such explanatory power over such a long period suggests its perceived utility and value. Even Witz (1994), who recognised that women's professions had a rather larger task than men's when engaged in demarcation and usurpation tactics, sought to show nursing's professional project as a planned undertaking for advancement. So why then do my findings come to such a different conclusion?

I attribute this difference in conclusions to the different perspective that a discourse analytical approach has brought to my own research. The novelty of

this approach in the study of profession creation has shed new light on a subject that has had little recent attention. In analysing texts as resources for creation rather than representative of events or things, a different picture of profession creation emerges and aspects of profession, previously unseen, come within our gaze. We can see what is in the process of creation and in so doing the reasons for new creations or recreations become visible. It becomes evident that if something needs to be discursively created it is not already in place and its absence is part of the problem the writer is addressing. Through a discourse analytical approach to researching social life that absence is rendered visible and noted. Thus we can see that the discursive creation of a masculine occupation may be indicative of its likely femininity or the creation of a profession in texts maybe indicative of its doubtful status in this respect.

The significance of discourse is frequently to be found in what is not said or what is omitted. The words themselves may tell us very little. It is in knowing what could be said but is not or what the alternatives might be that real understanding and learning may be gained. In order to access this understanding, however, knowledge of potential alternatives is essential. Without their prior existence they cannot be brought forward for use and thus feminine alternatives to the reconstruction of probation exist even if only in historical texts or in the minds of researchers. A discourse analysis approach shows how some constructions disappear as new characteristics are valued and captured for use. This knowledge of how change can be achieved over time is important. By challenging current discourses and in bringing forwards alternative constructions, change is possible (Derrida 1978), and it is the writing differently and critically about the

relationship between professions and masculinity in order to change it, that has been the purpose of this thesis.

In order to begin to engage with the texts produced during the period I was researching, I read previous texts on probation as fairly accurate accounts of the profession's history much in the same way as those who have previously researched professions. Yet, I argue in this thesis that professions' texts should be read more as profession in construction (or maintenance) rather than as a true record of events. It seems therefore that nothing can be assumed and my own understanding of probation's history and hence the starting point in this project may be flawed. To be certain that I had arrived at an understanding based on something closer to reality than that provided by other writers, would have required a discourse analytical approach to the many hundreds of historical accounts that have contributed to my current understanding of probation's history and development. This was simply not feasible. In acknowledging textual preparation as an act of creation, I am also opening up the possibility that my narrative is also a highly creative act with the potential for more fiction than fact. In my defence I can argue that our constructions are constrained by the relevant discursive rules and we police our own behaviour because we know it can be scrutinised. So, the extent to which I have exercised my creative skills or imagination has been bounded by the academic discursive rules under which this thesis has been produced. Ultimately though, I cannot privilege the findings of this research as being closer to some absolute truth than my predecessors'.

## **Race and other research**

In conducting this research I have concentrated on gender. Throughout the study I was aware that much could be said in respect of race and a similar approach might be employed in future research in respect of many occupations. To illustrate, whilst writing this final chapter I came across an article in the Guardian (28/05/03) about Rageh Omaar who covered, for the BBC, the coalition forces invasion of Iraq in 2003. Mr Omaar is a black, Somalian, Muslim based in Africa. In his own words, he identifies with black people and would wish, if he were to be a role model, to be a role model for young black people. As noted by the Guardian, his reporting during the war had made him 'the man of the moment' and he was enjoying his success. Yet the article, whilst recognising that Mr Omaar was black seemed to have difficulty squaring this with its understanding of a successful war reporter. The article made much of his 'impeccable British accent', his Oxford schooling, his university career and 'his marriage into an aristocratic family (his wife is the daughter of a baronet whose title dates from the 1660s)'. The message was very plain: top journalists are upper class (white) gentlemen. Just occasionally one might be black but only if he had other sufficiently white credentials. Journalism, whilst appearing on one hand to be promoting the inclusion of black people, was evidently saying it was not a suitable occupation for ordinary, able, black youngsters from South London who might have been inspired by Mr Omaar's success. A discourse analytical approach, perhaps with the insights gained from this research, can show how race and occupations are constructed in texts and how they link with other discourses, such as those on journalism, the 'BBC' and being 'British'.

Just as it is increasingly difficult to exclude women from occupations on the basis of their gender, so too is it increasingly difficult to exclude black people. But, as this research has shown, occupations which have learned to avoid overt discrimination and exclusion can construct discursively an occupation as unsuitable for those who do not conform to gendered, and possibly racial, requirements. An analysis of the racial construction of occupations, using a discourse analytical approach, might reveal other underlying societal values and systems of occupational discrimination, values and systems that this study has not been able to address.

### **Achieving a new understanding**

At the beginning of this thesis I stated that it was 'as much a journey in search of a theory to aid understanding, as it was to provide an empirical analysis of the construction of a credible profession.' At the end of this journey there is no single theory which explains the masculinization of probation other than the valorization of masculine qualities by occupations and employing institutions. I also noted at the start of the thesis that the journey was as much a personal as an academic one; I wanted to understand the rules under which I was working.

I explained earlier how my career in probation had followed a typical male route but in doing so I had had opportunities to bring a feminist approach to work and management. To be heard and understood by men, and, after all, it was men as the holders of power that I was most keen to influence, required conforming to the masculine organizational rules laid down for speaking. Without a seat at the table, I could not speak at it. But I also noted that when 'the going got tough' for

probation, I silenced my feminist voice and that as part of the management group, my corporate voice in promoting and protecting the institution was a masculine one. Through this research I have come to know that this silencing of my feminist voice was replicated widely; having a critical mass of women within an organization will not necessarily lead to its transformation into one that values women and their contributions, particularly when under threat. The reverse may be true.

Just as more women are in professional roles, more women are in management roles. This however, is not indicative of where occupational power and influence lie. This juxtaposition of women and feminism within a masculine professional or academic framework is an interesting one. Once the numbers of women in probation were such that they were perceived as a problem for the government and the profession, male values and masculinism as an ideology for practice came to the fore. Within this value and ideological framework it was possible for a woman to be appointed to head the new national probation service and for a woman to be responsible for the national training organisation responsible for the new probation training arrangements. From this I conclude that full assimilation into an organization may be for many women and black people a mark of gender or racial compromise. Success as a professional and as a manager may be dependent on the assimilation of values that are not necessarily compatible with those that are personally held.

Finally, in spite of recent lack of interest in the making of professions by academics, it is clear that there is still much that can be learned by such study.

The occupational category of profession retains significant meaning for those who are included or would be included in the term. Moreover, understandings of how professions are created and sustained continue to drive the actions of both occupations and policy makers. Such study, therefore, has much to contribute to our understanding of how social status and social inequality is sustained if examined from a critical perspective. The systems of power and privilege can be illuminated by the study of the professions as can the underlying societal values and those of the more powerful elites.

## APPENDIX 1

### SOURCES

#### **Defence of training**

Central probation Council, Association of Chief Officers of Probation, Joint Universities Council-Social Work Education Committee and NAPO. Joint Statement: Probation Training. London, ACOP/CPC/JUSWEC (1994).

National Association of Probation Officers and Association of Chief Officers of Probation. The Probation Service: Training for Improved Service Delivery, A Discussion Paper. London, NAPO/ACOP 1994.

CCETSW Workshop Proceedings. The Diploma in Social Work and the Requirements for Probation Officer Training in England and Wales: Output of a Workshop held on February 17 and 18 1994 in Birmingham. London, CCETSW 1994.

NAPO. (1995a). Probation – A Service in Demand: A Briefing from the National Association of Probation Officers. London: NAPO.

NAPO (1995b). Questions and Answers – Guidance to Lobbyists. NAPO News November 1995. London: NAPO.

NAPO (1995c). Probation Officers Training Under Threat: A Briefing From the National Association of Probation Officers. London: NAPO.

NAPO (1995d). Response to Dews Report of the Review of Probation Officer Recruitment and Qualifying Training and the Home Office Proposals for Change. London: NAPO.



NAPO (1996). Probation Officer Recruitment and Training: A Briefing from NAPO. London: NAPO.

ACOP. (1995a). Review of Probation Officer Recruitment and Qualifying Training: Response by Association of /Chief Officers of Probation to Home Office Discussion Paper. London: ACOP

ACOP. (1995b). The Recruitment and Qualifying Training of Probation Officers: Parliamentary Briefing by the Association of Chief Officers of Probation. London: ACOP.

NE Training Consortium (1995). The Shape of Things to Come, Conference Summary 27 March 1995. Newcastle: ACOP.

### **Recruitment**

The Probation Service and Home Office (1993). Facing Up to Crime. London: Home Office.

The Probation Service and Home Office (1997). The Probation Service: Working to Reduce Crime and Protect the Public. London: Home Office.

### **Publicity materials**

ACOP Booklets 1999

- a) Sex offenders: Protecting the Public
- b) Stopping Violence
- c) Young People and Crime
- d) Drink and Drugs
- e) Community Safety

- f) Car Crime
- g) Victims of Crime
- h) Protecting the Public

NAPO (1987). Supervision in the Community: Probation Working. London, NAPO.

NAPO (1997). Probation: A Service for the Future. London, NAPO.

### **Journals (internal probation discussions)**

#### **Probation Journal 1986-1999**

Clarke, D. (1994) Probation Qualifying training: Can the DipSW Deliver? Probation Journal 41 (3) 152-155.

Deering, J., Thurston, R, and Vanstone, M. (1996). Individual supervision and reconviction: an experimental programme in Pontypridd. Probation Journal 43 (2) 70-77.

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Lisser, M (1996) Crisis? What Crisis? Probation Journal. 43 (1) 52-53.

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Toms, A (1996) Our Principle Need. Probation Journal. 43 (1) 54-55.

Ward, D. and Spencer, J (1994) Training in jeopardy. Probation Journal. 41 (4) 249-250.

Webb T (1996) Reconviction predictors for probation. Probation Journal  
43 (1) 8-13.

#### NAPO Newsletter 1986-1999

Davies, M and O'Hare, R (1995) 'An open letter to the Home Secretary'.  
NAPO News May 1995. 10.

Vista (ACOP Journal) 1995-1999 (published only from 1995).

Statham, R (1997). Being on the front line: the probation reality. Vista 3  
(2) 124-131.

#### **Policies and guidance**

ACOP policies and good practice guidance from 1980-1999

NAPO policies and good practice guidance from 1972-1999

NAPO AGM and SGM motions and resolutions 1979-1999

Home Office Inspection Reports and Annual Reports 1992-1999 (HMI was not  
established on Statutory footing until 1992)

#### **Press coverage**

Total 'probation' press coverage 94-96, and partial coverage from 1992-1994 and  
1996-1999.

## APPENDIX 2

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

Home Office motivation to change the training arrangements.

What they (NAPO/ACOP/CPC/individual) thought the Home office was seeking to change about the profile of recruits.

Their (NAPO/ACOP/CPC/individual) views about the proposals?

The strategy for addressing the proposals (e.g. committees/working groups, producing papers, gaining support, working with other organisations, direct actions, lobbying).

The bottom line and what compromises might be made.

Allies and enemies.

Working with each other (NAPO/ACOP/CPC/CVC).

Constituent interests (e.g. government, staff, ACOP/NAPO, Labour in opposition, local interests).

Anticipated different in new recruits.

Gainers and losers from the project.

## APPENDIX 3

### GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ACOP	Association of Chief Officers of Probation
ACPO	Assistant Chief Probation Officer
CCETSW	Central Council for the Education and Training in Social Work
CETS	Church of England Temperance Society
CPC	Central council for Probation Committees
CPO	Chief Probation Officer
CQSW	Certificate for the Qualification in Social Work
DCPO	Deputy Chief Probation Officer
DipSw	Diploma in Social Work
HO	Home Office
HOC	Home Office Circular
JNC	Joint Negotiating Committee
JU-SWEC	Joint Universities Council – Social Work Education Committee
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
NAPO	National Association of Probation Officers
NMAG	National Members Action Group
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
PO	Probation Officer
PPO	Principle Probation Officer
PSD	Petty Sessional Division
PSR	Pre-Sentence Report

RMIS	Resource Management Information System
SER	Social Enquiry Report
SNOP	Statement of National Objectives and standards for the Probation Service
SPO	Senior Probation Officer

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